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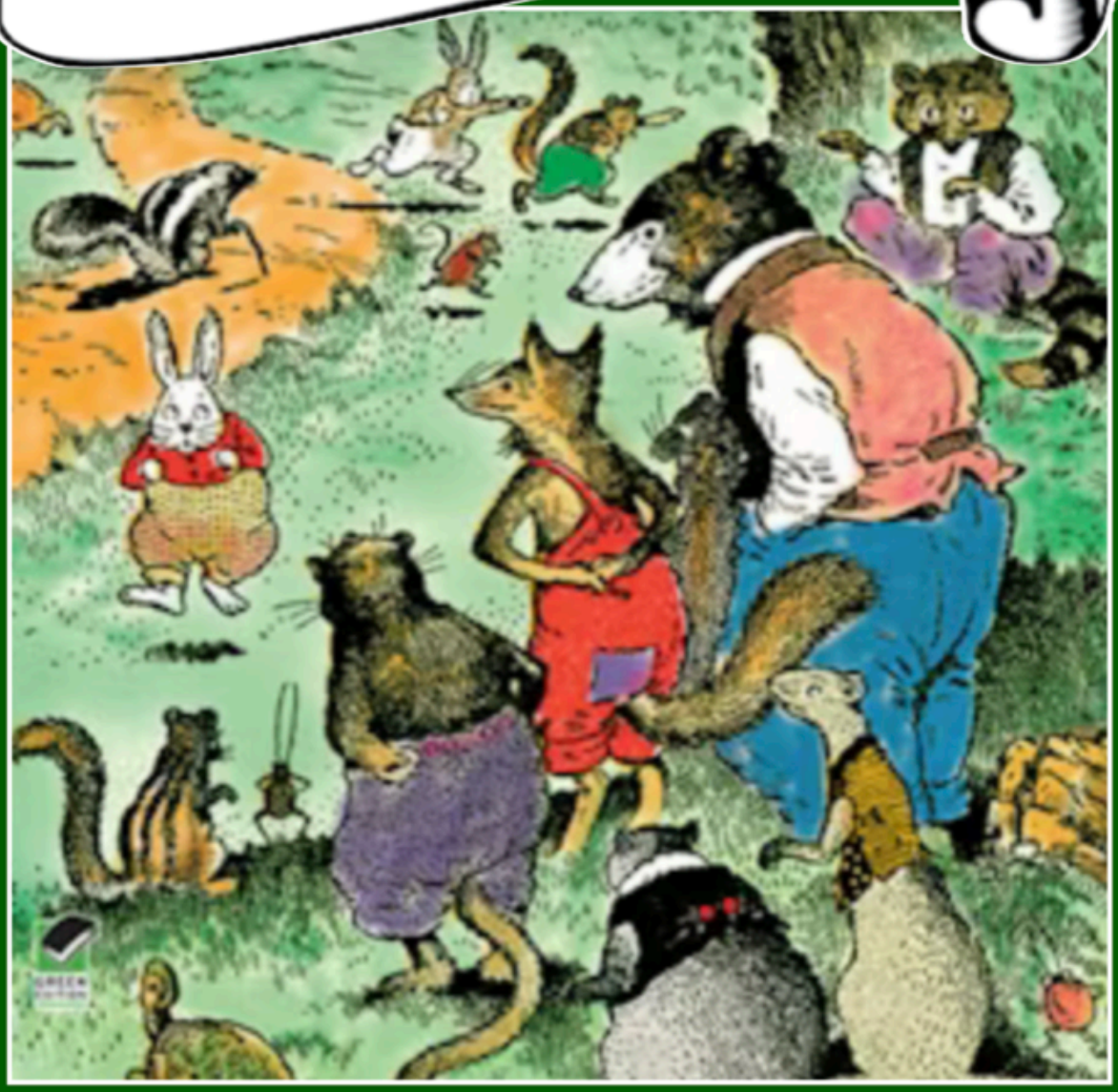

OLD MOTHER "WHERE" STORIES

By

Thornton W. Burgess

Gunston Classics

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PO BOX 5905
BALTIMORE, MD 21282

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"Then there was a crash, and everybody's eyes flew open."
Frontispiece

OLD MOTHER WEST WIND "WHERE" STORIES

BY

THORNTON W. BURGESS

Illustrations by HARRISON CADY

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MOTHER WEST WIND "WHERE" STORIES

I

WHERE GRANDFATHER FROG GOT HIS BIG MOUTH

Everybody knows that Grandfather Frog has a big mouth. Of course! It wouldn't be possible to look him straight in the face and not know that he has a big mouth. In fact, about all you see when you look Grandfather Frog full in the face are his great big mouth and two great big goggly eyes. He seems then to be all mouth and eyes.

Anyway, that is what Peter Rabbit says. Peter never will forget the first time he saw Grandfather Frog. Peter was very young then. He had run away from home to see the Great World, and in the course of his wanderings he came to the Smiling Pool. Never before had he seen so much water. The most water he had ever seen before was a little puddle in the Lone Little Path. So when Peter, who was only half grown then, hopped out on the bank of the Smiling Pool and saw it dimpling and smiling in the sunshine, he thought it the most wonderful thing he ever had seen. The truth is that in those days Peter was in the habit of

thinking everything he saw for the first time the most wonderful thing yet, and as he was continually seeing new things, and as his eyes always nearly popped out of his head whenever he saw something new, it is a wonder that he didn't become pop-eyed.

Peter stared and stared at the Smiling Pool, and little by little he began to see other things. First he noticed the bulrushes growing with their feet in the water. They looked to him like giant grass, and he began to be a little fearful lest this should prove to be a sort of magic place—a place of giants. Then he noticed the lily-pads, and he stared very hard at these. They looked like growing things, and yet they seemed to be floating right on top of the water. It wasn't until a Merry Little Breeze came along and turned the edge of one up so that Peter saw the long stem running down in the water out of sight, that he was able to understand how those lily-pads could be growing there. He was still staring at those lily-pads when a great deep voice said:

"Chug-a-rum! Chug-a-rum! Don’t you know it isn't polite to stare at people?"

That voice was so unexpected and so deep that Peter was startled. He jumped, started to run, then stopped. He wanted to run, but curiosity wouldn't let him. He simply couldn't run away until he had found out where that voice came from and to whom it belonged. It seemed to Peter that it had come from right out of the Smiling Pool, but look as he would, he couldn't see any one there.

"If you please," said Peter timidly, "I'm not staring at anybody." All the time he was staring down into the Smiling Pool with eyes fairly popping out of his head.

"Chug-a-rum! Have a care, young fellow! Have a care how you talk to your elders. Do you mean to be impudent enough to tell me to my face that I am not anybody?" The voice was deeper and gruffer than ever, and it made Peter more uncomfortable than ever.

"Oh, no, Sir! No, indeed!" exclaimed Peter. "I don't mean anything of the kind. I—I—well, if you please, Sir, I don't see you at all, so how can I be staring at you? I'm sure from the sound of your voice that you must be somebody very important. Please excuse me for seeming to stare. I was just looking for you, that is all."

A little movement in the water close to a big green lily-pad caught Peter's eyes, and then out on the big green lily-pad climbed Grandfather Frog. If Peter had stared before he doubly stared now, eyes and mouth wide open. Grandfather Frog was looking his very best in his handsome green coat and white-and-yellow waistcoat. But Peter had hardly noticed these at all.

"Why, you're all mouth!" he exclaimed, and then looked very much ashamed of his impoliteness.

Grandfather Frog's great goggly eyes twinkled. He knew that Peter was very young and innocent and just starting out in the Great World. He knew that Peter didn't intend to be impolite.

"Not quite," said he good-naturedly. "Not quite all mouth, though I must admit that it is of good size. The fact is, I wouldn't have it a bit smaller if I could. If it were any smaller, I should miss many a good meal, and if I were forced to do that, I am afraid I should be very ill-tempered indeed. The truth is, I am very proud of my big mouth. I don't know of any one who has a bigger one for their size."

He opened his mouth wide, and it seemed to Peter that Grandfather Frog's whole head simply split in halves. He hadn't supposed anybody in all the Great World possessed such a mouth.

"Where did you get it?" gasped Peter, and then felt that he had asked a very foolish question.

Grandfather Frog chuckled. "I got it from my father, and he got his from his father, and so on, way back to the days when the world was young

and the Frogs ruled the world," said he. "Would you like to hear about it?"

"I'd love to!" cried Peter. So he settled himself comfortably on the bank of the Smiling Pool for the first of many, many stories he was to hear from Grandfather Frog.

"Chug-a-rum!" began Grandfather Frog. You know he always begins a story that way. "Chug-a-rum! Once upon a time the Great World was mostly water, and most of the people lived in the water. It was in those days that my great-great-ever-so-great-grandfather lived. Those were happy days for the Frogs. Yes, indeed, those were happy days for the Frogs. Of course they had enemies, but those enemies were all in the water. They didn't have to be watching out for danger from the air and from the land, as I do now. There was plenty to eat and little to do, and the Frog tribe increased very fast. In fact, the Frogs increased so fast that after a while there wasn't plenty to eat. That is, there wasn't plenty of the kind of food they had been used to, which was mostly water plants, and water bugs and such things.

"Of course there were many fish, and these also increased very fast, and the big fish ate the Frogs whenever they could catch them, just as they do to this day. The big fish also ate the little fish, and it wasn't long before the Frogs and the little fish took to living where the water was not deep enough for the big fish to swim, and this made it all the harder to get enough to eat. The mouths of the Frogs in those days were not big. In fact, they were quite small. You see, living on the kind of food they did, they had no need of big mouths.

"One day as a Great-great-ever-so-great-grandfather Frog sat with just his head out of water, wondering what it would seem like to have his stomach really filled, a school of little fish came swimming about him, and it popped into his head that if little fish were good for big fish to eat, they might be

GRANDFATHER FROG HAD A BIG MOUTH."

good for a Frog to eat. So he caught the first one that came within reach, and he found it was good to eat. He liked it so well that after that he caught fish whenever he could. Of course he swallowed them whole. He had to, because he had no chewing or biting teeth.

"Now the Frogs always have been famous for their appetites, and Great-grandfather Frog found that it took a great many of these teeny weeny fish to make a comfortable meal. He was thinking of this one day when a larger fish came within reach, and almost without realizing what he was doing Great-grandfather snapped at and caught him. He caught the fish by the tail and at once began to swallow it, which, of course, was no way to swallow a fish. But Great-grandfather Frog had much to learn in those day, and so he tried to swallow that fish tail first instead of head first. He got the tail down and the smallest part of the body, and then that fish stuck. Yes, Sir, that fish stuck. The fact was, Great-grandfather Frog's mouth wasn't wide enough. It was bad enough not to be able to swallow all of that fish, but what was worse was the discovery that he couldn't get up again what he had swallowed. That fish was stuck! It would go neither down nor up.

"Poor Great-grandfather Frog was in a terrible fix. Big tears rolled down his cheeks. He choked and choked and choked, until it looked very much as if he might choke to death. Just in time, in the very nick of time, who should come along but Old Mother Nature. She saw right away what the trouble was, and she pulled out the fish. Then she asked how that fish had happened to be in such a place as Great-grandfather Frog's mouth. When he could get his breath, he told her all about it—how food had been getting scarce and how he had discovered that fish were good to eat, and how he had make a mistake in catching a fish too big for his mouth. Old Mother Nature looked thoughtful. She saw the great numbers of young fish. Suddenly she reached over and put a finger in Great-grandfather Frog's mouth and stretched it sideways. Then she did the same thing to the other corner. Great-grandfather Frog's mouth was three times as big as it had been before.

"'Now,' said she, 'I don't believe you'll have any more trouble, and I'm going to do the same thing for all the other Frogs.'

"She did that very day, and from then on the Frogs no longer had any trouble in getting plenty to eat. So that is where I got my big mouth, and I tell you right now I wouldn't trade it for anything anybody else has got," concluded Grandfather Frog, as he snapped up a foolish green fly who came too near.

"I think it is splendid, perfectly splendid," cried Peter. "I wish I had one just like it." And then he wondered why Grandfather Frog laughed so hard.

II

WHERE MISER THE TRADE RAT FIRST SET UP SHOP

It was quite by accident that Peter Rabbit first heard of Miser the Trade Rat. You know how it is with Peter; he is forever using those big ears of his to learn interesting things. That is what ears are for; but there is a right way and a wrong way to use them, and I am afraid that Peter isn't always over-particular in this respect. I suspect, in fact I know, that Peter sometimes listens when he has no business to listen and knows he has no business to listen. Again he sometimes overhears things quite by accident when he cannot very well help hearing. It was in this way that he first heard of Miser the Trade Rat.

Peter had crept into a hollow log in the Green Forest to rest and to feel absolutely safe while he was doing it. He had been there only a little while when he heard light footsteps outside and a moment later a voice which made him shiver a little in spite of himself and the knowledge that he was perfectly safe. The footsteps and the voice were Old Man Coyote's.

Very carefully Peter peeped out. Old Man Coyote had sat down close by the log in which Peter was hiding. On a dead tree close at hand sat Ol' Mistah Buzzard, who had come up from way down south for the summer, and it was to him that Old Man Coyote was talking.

"I was over by Farmer Brown's barn last night," said Old Man Coyote, "and I caught a glimpse of Robber the Brown Eat. What a disgrace he is to the whole Rat tribe! For that matter, he is a disgrace to all who live on the Green Meadows and in the Green Forest. He isn't much like his cousin, Miser the Trade Rat."

"Mah goodness! Do yo' know Miser?" exclaimed Ol' Mistah Buzzard.

"Do I know Miser? I should say I do!" replied Old Man Coyote. "I've tried to catch him enough times to know him. He kept a junk shop very near where I used to live way out west. Do you know him, Mr. Buzzard?"

"Ah cert'nly does," chuckled Ol' Mistah Buzzard. "Ah cert'nly does. Ah never did see such a busy fellow as he is. Ah done see his junk shop many times, and always it done be growin' bigger. Ah wonders, Brer Coyote, if yo' ever heard the story of his Great-great-ever-so-great-gran'-daddy, the first of the family, and how and where he started the business that's been kept in the family ever since."

"No," said Old Man Coyote, "I never did, and I've wondered about it a great deal."

Peter Rabbit almost forgot that he was hiding. He was so eager to hear that story that he was right on the point of speaking up and begging Ol' Mistah Buzzard to tell it when he remembered Old Man Coyote. Just in the nick of time he clapped a hand over his mouth. It seemed to Peter a long, long time before Old Man Coyote said:

"I'd like to hear that story, Mr. Buzzard, if it isn't too much to ask of you."

"Not at all, Brer Coyote; not at all.

Ah'll be mor'n pleased to tell it to yo'. Ah cert'nly will," said Ol' Mistah Buzzard, and Peter settled himself comfortably to listen.

"Yo' see it was this way," began Ol' Mistah Buzzard. "Ah got it from mah gran'daddy, and he got it from his gran'daddy, and his gran'daddy got it from—"

"I know," interrupted Old Man Coyote. "It was handed down from your greatest-great-grandfather, who lived in the days when the world was young and what you are going to tell me about happened. Isn't that it?"

"Yes, Suh," replied Ol' Mistah Buzzard. "Yes, Suh, that's it. Ol' Mother Nature treat 'em all alike in those days. She's a right smart busy person, and she ain't got no time fo' to answer foolish questions. No, Suh, she ain't. So, quick as she get a new kind of critter made, she turn him loose and tell him if he want to live he got to be right smart and find out for hisself how to do it. Ah reckons yo' know all about that, Brer Coyote."

Old Man Coyote nodded, and Ol' Mistah Buzzard scratched his bald head gently as if trying to stir up his memory. Peter Rabbit almost squealed aloud in his impatience while he waited for Ol' Mistah Buzzard to go on.

"When Ol' Mother Nature made Brer Trade Rat in the beginning and turned him loose in the Great World, he was just plain Mistah Rat and nothing more, same as his no 'count cousin, Robber the Brown Rat," continued Ol' Mistah Buzzard. "He had to win a name for hisself same as ev'ybody else. He had mighty sharp wits, had this Mistah Rat, and directly he found he had to shift for hisself he began to study and study and study what he gwine to do to live well and be happy. He watched his neighbors to see what they did, and it didn't take him long to find out that if he would be respected he must have a home. Those without homes were mostly no 'count folks, same as they are today.

"So Brer Rat made a nest close to the trunk of a tree on the edge of the Green Forest, a soft, warm nest, and in collectin' the stuff to make it of he learned the joy of bein' busy. Person'ly, yo' understand, Ah thinks he was all wrong. Ah never am so happy as when Ah can take a sun-bath with nothin' to do. But Brer Rat was never so happy as when he was busy, and when he got that li'l nest finished time began to hang heavy on his hands.

Yes, Suh, it cert'nly did. Just because he didn't have anything else to do he began to add a little more to his house. One day he stepped on a thorn. 'Ouch!' cried Brer Rat, and then right away forgot the pain in a new idea. He would cover his house with thorns, leavin' just a little

secret entrance for hisself! Then he would be safe, wholly safe from his big neighbors, some of whom had begun to look at him with such a hungry look in their eyes that they made him right smart uncomfortable. So he spent his time, did Brer Rat, in huntin' for the longest and sharpest thorns and in cuttin' the branches on which they grew. These he carried to his house and piled them around it and on it until it had become a great pile with sharp thorns stickin' out in every direction, and the hungriest of the big people of theforest passed it at a respectful distance.

"When Brer Rat had all the thorns he needed and more, he began to collect other things and added these to his pile. Yo' see, he had found that it was great fun to collect things; to find the queerest things he could and bring them home and look at them and wonder about them. So little by little his house became a sort of junk shop, the very first one in all the Great World. Bright stones and shells, bones, anything that caught his bright eyes and pleased them, he brought home. When he was tired of huntin' fo' food or more strange things he would sit and gloat over his treasures and play with them. And then the first thing he knew he had a name. Yes, Suh, he had a name. He was called Miser.

"Of course Brer Miser hadn't lived ve'y long befo' he found out that one law of the Great World was that things belonged to whoever could get them and keep them. He saw that some thought themselves ve'y smart when they stole from their neighbors. Brer Miser didn't like this at all. He was ve'y, ye'y honest, was Brer Miser. Perhaps he wasn't really much tempted, not fo' a long time anyway.

"But at last came a time when he was tempted. Quite by accident he found one of Mr. Squirrel's storehouses. In it were some nuts different from any he ever had seen befo'. 'Brer Squirrel won't mind if Ah taste just one,' said he, and did it. It tasted good; it tasted ve'y good indeed. Brer Miser began to wish he had some nuts like those. When he got home he couldn't think of anything but how good those nuts tasted. He knew that

all he had to do was to watch until Brer Squirrel was away and then go he'p hisself. He knew that was just what any of his neighbors would do in his place. But Brer Miser couldn't make it seem just right any way he looked at it. He was too honest, was Brer Miser, to do anything like that.

"He was sitting staring at his treasures but thinking about those nuts when an idea popped into his head, an idea that made him smile until Ah reckons he most split his cheeks. 'Ah knows what Ah'll do,' said he. 'Ah'll just he'p mahself to some of those nuts and Ah'll leave something of mine in place of them. That's what Ah'll do.'

"And that's what he did do. He picked out a bright shell of which he was very fond and he left it in Brer Squirrel's storehouse to pay fo' the nuts that he took. After that he always helped himself to anything he wanted, but he always left something to pay fo' it. It wasn't long befo' his neighbors found out what he was doing, and then they called him Miser the Trade Rat. Whenever anybody found something he didn't want hisself, he took it to the little junk shop of Miser the Trade Rat and traded it fo' something else, or left it where Miser would find it, knowing that Miser would leave something in its place.

"And it's been just so with Miser's family ever since. There is one Rat who is a credit to his family instead of a disgrace," concluded Ol' Mistah Buzzard.

III

WHERE YAP-YAP THE PRAIRIE DOG USED HIS WITS

Peter Rabbit had just had a great fright. He is used to having great frights, but this time it was a different kind of a fright. It was not for himself that he had been afraid but for one of his old friends and neighbors. Now that it was over, Peter drew a little breath of sheer relief.

You see it was this way: Peter had started over for a call on Johnny Chuck. When he reached Johnny Chuck's house he found no one at home. At first he thought he would go look for Johnny, for he knew that Johnny must be somewhere near, as he never goes far from his own doorstep. Then he changed his mind and decided to wait for Johnny to return. So he stretched himself out in some tall grass beside Johnny Chuck's house, intending to jump out and give Johnny a scare when he came home. Hardly had he settled himself when he heard Johnny coming, and he knew by the sounds that Johnny was running from some danger.

Very, very carefully Peter raised his head to see. Then he ducked it again and held his breath. Johnny Chuck was running as Peter never had seen him run before and with very good reason. Just a few jumps behind Johnny's twinkling little black heels was Old Man Coyote. It looked to Peter as if Old Man Coyote certainly would catch Johnny Chuck this time. He was so frightened for Johnny that he quite forgot that he himself might be in danger. Head first through his doorway plunged Johnny, and Old Man Coyote's teeth snapped together on nothing.

Old Man Coyote backed away a few steps and sat down with his head on one side as he studied Johnny Chuck's house in the ground. It was plain to be seen that he was trying to make up his mind whether it would be worth while to try to dig Johnny out. Presently Johnny came half-way up

his long hall where he could look out. Then he began to scold Old Man Coyote. Old Man Coyote grinned.

"I give up, Johnny Chuck," said he. "You did well when you made your home between the roots of this old tree. If it wasn't for those roots, I certainly would dig you out. As it is you are safe. You remind me very much of your cousin, Yap-Yap the Prairie Dog, who lives out where I came from. There's a fellow who certainly knows how to make a house in the ground. He doesn't have to depend on the roots of trees to keep from being dug out. Well, I guess it is a waste of time to hang around here. You'll make just as good a dinner some other time as you would now, so I'll wait until then." Old Man Coyote grinned wickedly and trotted off.

Now at the mention of Yap-Yap the Prairie Dog, the long ears of Peter Rabbit had pricked up at once. It was the first time he had heard of Yap-Yap, and when at last Johnny Chuck ventured out Peter was as full of questions as a pea-pod is of peas.

But Johnny Chuck knew nothing about his cousin, Yap-Yap, and wasn't even interested in him. So finally Peter left him and went back home to the dear Old Briar-patch. But he couldn't get Yap-Yap out of his mind, and he resolved that the first chance he got he would ask Old Man Coyote about him. The chance came that very night. Old Man Coyote came along by the dear Old Briar-patch and stopped to peer in and grin at Peter. Peter grinned back, for he knew that under those friendly brambles he was quite safe.

"I heard what you said to Johnny Chuck about his cousin, Yap-Yap," said Peter.

Old Man Coyote looked as surprised as he felt. "Where were you?" he demanded gruffly.

"Lying flat in the grass close by

Johnny Chuck's house," replied Peter, and grinned more broadly than ever.

"And to think I didn't know it!" sighed Old Man Coyote. "When I failed to catch Johnny Chuck, I thought I had missed only one dinner, but it seems I missed two. Next time I shall look around a little more sharply. Do you know, the sight of Johnny Chuck always makes me homesick, he reminds me so much of his cousin, Yap-Yap, and the days when I was young."

"I didn't know that Johnny Chuck had a cousin until you mentioned it," said Peter. "Does he look like Johnny? Won't you tell me about him, Mr. Coyote?"

"Seeing that I haven't anything in particular to do, I don't know but I will," replied Old Man Coyote, who happened to be feeling very good-natured. "Many and many a time I have chased Yap-Yap into his house. Seems as if I can hear the rascal scolding me and calling me names right this minute. He used to get me so provoked that it was all I could do to keep from trying to dig him out."

"Why didn't you?" asked Peter.

"Because it would have meant a waste of time, sore feet, and nothing to show for my trouble," retorted Old Man Coyote. "Yap-Yap never has forgotten what his great-great-ever-so-great-grandfather learned when he first took to living on the open prairie."

"What did he learn? Tell me about it, Mr. Coyote," begged Peter.

"He learned to use his wits," replied Old Man Coyote, with a provoking grin. "He learned to use his wits, that's all."

"Please tell me about it, Mr. Coyote. Please," begged Peter.

"Once upon a time," began Old Man Coyote, "so my grandfather told me, and he got it from his grandfather, who got it from his grandfather, who—"

"I know," interrupted Peter. "It happened in the days when the world was young."

Old Man Coyote looked at Peter very hard as if he had half a mind not to tell the story, but Peter looked so innocent and so eager that he began again. "Once upon a time lived the great-great-ever-so-great-grandfather of Yap-Yap, the very first of all the Prairie Dogs, and his name was Yap-Yap too. He was own cousin to old Mr. Woodchuck, who of course wasn't old then, and the two cousins looked much alike, save that Yap-Yap was a little smaller than Mr. Woodchuck and perhaps a little smarter looking.

"From the very beginning Yap-Yap was a keen lover of the great open spaces. Trees were all very well for those who liked them, but he preferred to have nothing above him but the blue, blue sky. It seemed to him that he never could find a big enough open space, so he never stayed very long in any one place, but kept pushing on and on, looking for a spot in the Great World that would just suit him. At last he came to the edge of the Green Forest, and before him, as far as he could see, stretched the Green Meadows. At least it was like the Green Meadows, only a million thousand times as big as the Green Meadows we are on now, Peter, and was really the Great Prairie.

"Yap-Yap looked and looked, then he drew a long breath of pure joy and started out across the green grass. On and on he went, until when he sat up and looked this way or that way or the other way he could see nothing but grass and flowers, and over him was naught but the blue, blue sky. He had found the great open space of which he had dreamed, and he was happy. So he ate and slept and played with the Merry Little Breezes and grew fat.

"Then one day came Skimmer the Swallow and brought him news of the hard times which had come to the rest of the Great World and how as a result the big and the strong were hunting the small and the weak in order that they themselves might live. When Skimmer had gone, Yap-Yap grew uneasy. What if some of the big and strong people he had known should come out there in quest of food and should find him? There was no place in which to hide. There was no cave or hollow log.

"Yap-Yap looked at the strong claws Old Mother Nature had given him and an idea came to him. He would dig a hole in the ground. So he dug a hole on a long slant very much like the hole of Johnny Chuck; but when it was finished a little doubt crept into his head and grew and grew. What was to prevent some one who was very hungry from digging him out? So he moved on a little way and started another hole, and this time he made it almost straight down. Every day he made that hole deeper until it was many feet deep. Then he made a turn in it and dug a long tunnel, at the end of which he hollowed out a comfortable bedroom and lined it with grass. When it was finished he was quite satisfied.

"'I don't believe,' said he, 'that any one will have the patience to dig to the bottom of this.'

"So at night he slept in his bed at the end of his long hall far below the surface, but all day he spent above ground, for he dearly loved the sunshine. All went well until there came a time of heavy rains. Then Yap-Yap discovered that the water ran down his hole, and if he didn't do something, he was likely to be drowned out. Right away he set his sharp wits to work. He noticed that when the water on the surface reached the little piles of sand he had made, it ran around them. So he made a great mound of sand around his hole with the entrance in the middle and pressed it firm on the inside so that the rain would not wash it down in. Then, although the water stood all around, it no longer ran down in his house. In fair weather that mound was a splendid place on which to sit and watch for danger. So once more Yap-Yap was happy and care-free, all because he had used his wits.

"THEN ONE DAY CAME SKIMMER THE SWALLOW."

"And from that day to this the Prairie Dogs have made their houses in just that way, and no one that I know cares to try to dig one out," concluded Old Man Coyote.

IV

WHERE YELLOW-WING GOT HIS LIKING FOR THE GROUND

Peter Rabbit was hopping along on the edge of the Green Meadows, looking for a new patch of sweet clover. It was very beautiful that morning, and Peter was in the best of spirits. It was good just to be alive. Every once in a while Peter would jump up and kick his long heels together just from pure happiness. He was so happy that he didn't pay particular attention to where he was going or what was about him. The result was that Peter got a fright. Right from under his very nose something sprang out of the grass so suddenly and so wholly unexpectedly that Peter very nearly tumbled over backward. He made two long jumps off to one side and then turned to see what had startled him so. But all he saw was an old feathered acquaintance headed towards the Old Orchard. He seemed to bound along through the air much as Peter bounds along over the ground when he is in a hurry. It was Yellow-Wing the Flicker.

Peter grinned and looked a little foolish. He felt a little foolish. You know it always makes you feel foolish to be frightened when there is nothing to be afraid of. Peter watched Yellow-Wing until he disappeared among the trees of the Old Orchard, from which presently his voice sounded clear and loud, and in it there was a mocking note as if Yellow-Wing were laughing at him. Peter suspected that he was.

But Peter was feeling too happy to mind being laughed at. In fact, he chuckled himself. It was something of a joke to be frightened by one who was so wholly harmless. Peter recalled how many times he had frightened other people and thought it the best of jokes.

Peter went on until he found a new patch of sweet clover. Then he forgot all about Yellow-Wing. He was too busy filling that big stomach of his to think of anything else. When he couldn't find room for another leaf of clover he went home to the dear Old Briar-patch, and there in his favorite spot he settled himself to rest and think or dream as the case might be. Presently his thoughts returned to Yellow-Wing, and he chuckled again at the memory of his fright that morning. And then for the first time it struck Peter as queer that Yellow-Wing should have been out there on the Green Meadows on the ground. He often had seen Yellow-Wing on the ground, but until that moment there never had seemed anything queer about that. Now, however, it suddenly came to Peter that Yellow-Wing belonged in trees, not on the ground.

Peter scratched his long left ear with his long left hind foot, which was a sign that he was thinking of something that puzzled him. "He belongs to the Woodpecker family," thought Peter, "and never have I seen any of his relatives on the ground. They get all their food in the trees. Now why is Yellow-Wing so different from his relatives?"

The more Peter thought about it, the queerer it seemed that a Woodpecker should spend so much time on the ground, or visit the ground at all, for that matter. But just wondering about it didn't get him anywhere, and at last Peter decided that the only way to find out would be to ask questions. So Peter made up his mind to watch for Yellow-Wing and ask him all about it the first chance he got.

The chance came the very next day in the very same place where Peter had been so startled. This time he was on the watch and saw Yellow-Wing very busy about something. Peter stole up within speaking distance.

"Good morning, Yellow-Wing," said he. "I wonder if you will tell me something."

It was Yellow-Wing's turn to be startled, for he had not seen Peter approaching. He half lifted his wings to fly, but when he saw who it was, he changed his mind.

"It all depends on what it is you want me to tell you," he replied rather shortly.

"It is just this," replied Peter. "Why do you spend so much time on the ground?"

"That's easily answered," laughed Fellow-Wing. "I do it because it is the easiest way to get enough to eat."

Peter looked as surprised as he felt. "I thought that all your family got their living in the trees!" he exclaimed.

"All do but me," replied Yellow-Wing a wee bit testily. "But I don't have to do what they do just because they do it. No, Siree, I'm independent! Do you like ants, Peter?"

"What?" exclaimed Peter.

"I asked if you like ants," repeated Yellow-Wing.

"I've never tried them," Peter replied, "but I've heard Old Mr. Toad say they are very nice."

"They are," said Yellow-Wing. "They are more than nice—they are de-li-cious. It is because of them that I spend so much time on the ground. Ants changed the habits of the Flicker branch of the Woodpecker family. I wouldn't be surprised if we became regular ground birds one of these days."

Peter looked puzzled. He kept turning it over in his mind as he watched Yellow-Wing plunge his long stout bill into an ant hill and then gobble up the ants as they came rushing out to see what the trouble was.

"I don't see how ants could change the habits of anybody," he ventured after a while.

Yellow-Wing's eyes twinkled. "Why don't you learn to eat them?" he demanded. "If you would, they might change *your* habits. The beginning of the change in the habits of my folks began a long time ago."

"Way back in the beginning of things, when the world was young?" asked Peter.

"No, not quite so far back as that," replied Yellow-Wing. "Great-great-ever-so-great-grandfather, who was the first Flicker, was, of course, a member of the Woodpecker family, and he got his living in regular Woodpecker fashion. It never entered his head to look for food anywhere but in the trees, and I don't suppose that it ever entered his head to set foot on the ground. It was the same with his children and his children's children for a long time.

"But though they lived as true Woodpeckers should, the Flickers always were a bit sharper-witted and more independent than most of their relatives. For one thing they had discovered that ants were fine eating and that great numbers of them were to be found running up and down the trunks of certain trees. So the Flickers used to look for these trees and feast on the ants. It saved a lot of labor. A stomachful of ants could be picked from the trunk of a tree in the time it would take to dig out one worm in the wood, to say nothing of the saving of hard work.

"One day a few years ago my great-great-great-grandfather, so the story goes, had stuffed himself with ants from the trunk of a tree and had settled himself for a rest. From where he sat he could see a procession of ants going up and down the tree, and he got to wondering where they all came from and where they all went to. So he watched and presently discovered that that double line of ants led out along the ground from the foot of the tree. This made him still more curious and he followed it, flying along just over it. He had gone but a short distance when he came

to a little mound of sand, and there the line of ants ended. Grandfather Flicker flew up in a tree from which he could look right down on that mound, and it didn't take him long to discover that those ants were going in and out of little holes in that mound.

"'As I live, that must be their home!' exclaimed he. 'That place is alive with them. What a place to fill one's stomach! I never was on the ground in my life, but the next time I'm hungry, I'm going to see what the ground is like. I won't have to stay on it long to get my dinner here.'

"Grandfather Flicker was as good as his word. When he was ready for another meal, he flew down to that ant hill. He found that when he plunged his bill into it, the ants fairly poured out to see what was happening, and all he had to do was to thrust out his long sticky tongue and lick them up. Never in all his life before had he filled his stomach so easily. After that, instead of wasting time hunting for worms and insects in the trees where he could find only one at a time, Grandfather Flicker kept his eyes open for ant hills on the ground. He taught his children to do the same thing. That was the beginning of the change of habits with the Flickers. Ever since we have spent more and more time on the ground, so that now we feel quite at home there. We still get some of our food in the trees by way of variety, and we make our homes there, but a good big part of our food we get just as I am doing now."

With this Yellow-Wing once more plunged his bill into the ant hill and licked up a dozen ants who had come rushing out to see what was going on. And so once more the curiosity of Peter Rabbit was satisfied, and he had learned something.

V

WHERE LITTLE CHIEF LEARNED TO MAKE HAY

No one in all the Great World thinks more of the present and less of the future than does careless, happy-go-lucky Peter Rabbit. Everybody who knows Peter at all knows that Peter doesn't waste any time worrying over what may happen in a day that may never be. So Peter isn't thrifty as are Happy Jack Squirrel and Chatterer the Red Squirrel and Whitefoot the Wood Mouse and Paddy the Beaver and Striped Chipmunk.

"I've got enough to eat today, and enough is enough, so what is the use of working when I don't have to?" says Peter. "I don't believe in working today so that I won't have to work tomorrow, because when tomorrow comes there may be no need of working, and then I would feel that I had wasted all this good time today." No, Peter isn't the least bit thrifty.

It is the same way with Peter's big cousin, Jumper the Hare. The truth is the whole family is happy-go-lucky. Happy Jack Squirrel says that every blessed one of them is shiftless. It does look that way. It is a pity that Peter and Jumper never have learned a lesson from Little Chief Hare, who is commonly supposed to be a relative of theirs, although, as a matter of fact, he is neither a Hare nor a Rabbit, but is a Pika, which is another family altogether. He is also called a Coney and sometimes the Calling Hare. But if you want sure-enough proof that he is neither a Rabbit nor a Hare, just watch him, if you are lucky enough to have a chance, cut and dry and store away a great pile of hay for winter use. No true member of Peter's family ever would think of doing such a thing as that, more is the pity.

Peter never has seen Little Chief, because Little Chief lives high up on a mountain of the Far West among the rocks where Peter would never go, even if he could, but he has heard all about him. Old Man Coyote told

him all about him, and he got the story from his grandfather, who got it from his grandfather, who had one time visited the great mountain where Little Chief's ever-so-great-grandfather lived in the very place where Little Chief lives now. Old Man Coyote had chased Peter into the dear Old Briar-patch one cold winter day, and as he peered through the brambles at Peter he noticed that Peter was very thin, very thin indeed. Old Man Coyote grinned.

"I'm just as well pleased not to have caught you this time, Peter," said he. "You wouldn't make much of a dinner just now. When I dine I want something more than skin and bones. It must be that you are having as hard work as I am to get a living these days."

"I am," replied Peter. "With all this snow and ice on the ground, there is nothing to eat but bark and such tender twigs as I can reach, and they are not very filling. But they'll keep me alive until better times come, and then perhaps I'll get fat enough to suit you." It was Peter's turn to grin.

Old Man Coyote grinned back good-naturedly. "I should think, Peter," said he, "that when there is so much sweet grass and clover in the summer, you would make some of it into hay and store it away for winter, as Little Chief Hare does. There's the thrifty little hay-maker for you!"

"Who is Little Chief, and where did he learn to make hay?" demanded Peter, his ears standing straight up with curiosity.

Old Man Coyote likes to tell a story once in a while, and having nothing else to do just then, he sat down just outside the dear Old Briar-patch and told Peter all about Little Chief and his hay-making.

"Of course," said he, "Little Chief's father taught him how to make hay, and his father's father taught him, and so on way back to the days when the world was young and Old Mother Nature made the first Pika or Coney,

whichever you please to call him, and set him free on a great mountain to prove whether he was worthy to live or was so helpless that there was no place for him in the Great World. Now Mr. Pika, who was promptly called Little Chief, no one remembers now just why, was exactly like Little Chief of today. He was just about a fourth as big as you, Peter. In fact, he looked a lot like one of your babies, excepting his legs and his ears. His legs were short and rather weak, and his ears were short and rounded. He was very gentle and timid. He had neither the kind of teeth and claws for fighting nor long legs for running away, and it did seem as if Little Chief's chances of a long life and a happy one were very slim indeed, especially as it happened that he was set free to shift for himself just at the beginning of the hard times, when the big and strong had begun to hunt the small and weak.

"For a while Little Chief had a hard time of it and so many narrow escapes that his heart was in his mouth most of the time. In trying to keep out of the way of his enemies he kept climbing higher and higher up the mountain, for the higher he got the fewer enemies he found. At last he came to a big rock-slide above where the trees grew, and where there was nothing but broken stone and big rocks. The sun lay there very warm, and Little Chief crept out among the stones to take a sun-bath; as he squatted there it would have taken keen eyes indeed to tell him from a stone himself, though he didn't know this.

"After he had had a good rest, and jolly Mr. Sun had moved so that Little Chief was no longer in the warm rays, Little Chief decided to look about a little. It didn't take him long to discover that there were wonderful little winding galleries and hiding-places down among the stones. These led to little cracks and caves deep down in the mountain side. Little Chief was tickled almost to death.

"'This is the place for me!' he cried. 'No one ever will think to look for me up here, and if they should they couldn't find me, for no one, not

even King Bear, could pull away these stones fast enough to catch me. All day long I can enjoy the sun, and at night I can sleep in perfect safety in one of these little caves.'

"So Little Chief made his home in the rock-slide high up on the mountain and was happy, for it was just as he thought it would be—no one thought of looking in that bare place for him. For food he ate the pea vines and grasses and other green things that grew just at the edge of the rock-slide and was perfectly happy. One day he decided he would take some of his dinner into his little cave and eat it there. So he cut a little bundle of pea vine and other green things. He left his little bundle on a flat rock in the sun while he went to look for something else and then forgot all about it. It didn't enter his head again until a few days later he happened along by that flat rock and discovered that little bundle. The pea vines and grasses were quite dry, just like the hay Farmer Brown's boy helps his father store away in the barn every summer.

"'I guess I don't want to eat that,' said Little Chief, 'but it will make me a very nice bed.' So he carried it home and made a bed of it. There wasn't quite enough, so the next day he cut some more and carried it home at once. But this, being green, soon soured and smelled so badly that he was forced to take it out and throw it away. That set him to thinking. Why was the first he had brought in so dry and sweet and pleasant? Why didn't it spoil as the other had done? He cut some more and spread it out on the big flat rock and once again he forgot. When he remembered and went to look at it two or three days later, he found it just like the first, dry and sweet and very pleasant to smell. This he took home to add to his bed. Then he took home some more that was green, and this spoiled just as the other had done.

"Little Chief was puzzling over this as he squatted on a rock taking a sun-bath. The sun was very warm and comforting. After a while the rock on which he sat grew almost hot. Little Chief had brought along a couple of pieces of pea vine on which to lunch, but not being hungry he left them beside him on the rock. By and by he happened to glance at them.

"Little Chief's father taught him how to make hay."

They had wilted and already they were beginning to dry. An idea popped into his funny little head.

"'It's the sun that does it!' he cried.

"Up he jumped and scampered away to cut some more and spread it out on the rocks. Then he discovered that the pea vine which he spread in the sun dried as he wanted it to, while any that happened to be left in the shadow of a rock didn't dry so well. He had learned how to make hay. He was the first hay-maker in the Great World. He soon had more than enough for a bed, but he kept on making hay and storing it away just for fun. Then came cold weather and all the green things died. There was no food for Little Chief. He hunted and hunted, but there was nothing. Then because he was so hungry he began to nibble at his hay. It tasted good, very good indeed. It tasted almost as good as the fresh green things. Little Chief's heart gave a great leap. He had food in plenty! He had nothing to worry about, for his hay would last him until the green things came again, as come they would, he felt sure.

"And so it proved. And that is how Little Chief the Pika learned to make hay while the sun shone in the days of plenty. He taught his children and they taught their children, and Little Chief of today does it just as his great-great-ever-so-great-grand-daddy did. I don't see why you don't do the same thing, Peter. You would make me a great deal finer dinner if you did."

"Perhaps that is the reason I don't," replied Peter with a grin.

VI

WHERE GLUTTON THE WOLVERINE GOT HIS NAME

Glutton the Wolverine is a dweller in the depths of the Great Forests of the Far North, and it is doubtful if Peter Rabbit would ever have known that there is such a person but for his acquaintance with Honker the Goose, who spends his summers in the Far North, but each spring and fall stops over for a day or two in a little pond in the Green Forest, a pond Peter often visits. This acquaintance with Honker and Peter's everlasting curiosity have resulted in many strange stories. At least they have seemed strange to Peter because they have been about furred and feathered people whom Peter has never seen. And one of the strangest of these is the story of how Glutton the Wolverine got his name.

Of course you know what a glutton is. It is one who is very, very, very greedy and eats and eats as if eating were the only thing in life worth while. It is one who is all the time thinking of his stomach. No one likes to be called a glutton. So when Honker the Goose happened to mention Glutton, it caused Peter to prick up his ears at once.

"Who's a glutton?" he demanded.

"I didn't say any one was a glutton," replied Honker. "I was speaking of Glutton the Wolverine who lives in the Great Forests of the Far North, and whom everybody hates."

"Is Glutton his name?" asked Peter, wrinkling his brows in perplexity, for it seemed a very queer name for any one.

"Certainly," replied Honker. "Certainly that is his name, and a very good name for him it is. But then of course it is because he *is* a glutton that he is named Glutton. Rather I should say that is the reason the first Wolverine was named Glutton. The name has been handed down ever

since, and it fits Mr. Wolverine of today quite as well as ever it did his great-great-ever-so-great-grandfather."

"Tell me about it," Peter begged. "Please tell me about it."

"Tell you about what?" asked Honker, pretending not to understand.

"About how the first Wolverine got the name of Glutton," replied Peter

been a very good reason, and if there was a very good reason, there must be a story. Please, Honker, tell me all about it."

Honker swam a little way out from shore, and with head held high and very still, he looked and listened and listened and looked until he was quite certain that no danger lurked near. Then he swam back to where Peter was sitting on the bank.

"Peter," said he, "I never in all my born days have seen such a fellow for questions as you are. If I lived about here, I think I should swim away every time I saw you coming. But as I only stop here for a day or two twice a year, I guess I can stand it. Besides, you really ought to know something about some of the people who live in the Great Forest. It is shameful, Peter, that you should be so ignorant.

And so if you will promise not to ask for another story while I am here, I will tell you about Glutton the Wolverine."

Of course Peter promised. He wanted that story so much that he would have promised anything. So Honker told the story, and here it is just as Peter heard it.

"Once upon a time long, long, long ago, the first Wolverine was sent out to find a place for himself in the Great World just as every one else had been sent out. Old Mother Nature had told him that he was related to Mr. Weasel and Mr. Mink and Mr. Fisher and Mr. Skunk, but no one would have guessed it just to look at him. In fact, some of his new neighbors were inclined to think that he was related to Old King Bear. Certainly he

looked more like King Bear than he did like little Mr. Weasel. But for his bushy tail he would have looked still more like a member of the Bear family. He was clumsy-looking. He was rather slow moving, but he was strong, very strong for his size. And he had a mean disposition. Yes, Sir, Mr. Wolverine had a mean disposition. He had such a mean disposition that he would snarl at his own reflection in a pool of water.

"Now you know as well as I do that no one with a mean disposition has any friends. It was so with Mr. Wolverine. When his neighbors found out what a mean disposition he had, they let him severely alone. They would go out of their way to avoid meeting him. This made his disposition all the meaner. He didn't really care because his neighbors would have nothing to do with him. No, he didn't really care, for the simple reason that he didn't want anything to do with them. But just the same it made him angry to have them show that they didn't want to have anything to do with him. Every time he would see one of them turn aside to avoid meeting him, he would snarl under his breath, and his eyes would glow with anger; he would resolve to get even.

"Being slow in his movements because of his stout build, he early realized that he must make nimble wits make up for the lack of nimble legs. He also learned very early in life that patience is a virtue few possess, and that patience and nimble wits will accomplish almost anything. So, living alone in the Great Forest, he practiced patience until no one in all the Great World could be more patient than he. No one all the time he was practicing patience, he was studying and studying the other people of the Great Forest, both large and small, learning all their habits, how they lived, where they lived, what they ate, and all about them.

"'One never knows when such knowledge may be useful,' he would say to himself. 'The more I know about other people and the less they know about me the better.'

"So Mr. Wolverine kept out of sight as much as possible, and none knew how he lived or where he lived or anything about him save that he had a mean disposition. Patiently he watched the other people, especially those of nimble wits who lived largely by their cunning and cleverness—Mr. Fox, Mr. Coyote, Mr. Lynx and his own cousins, Mr. Mink and Mr. and at last he was more cunning and more clever than any of them or even than all of them, for that matter.

"Living alone as he did, and having a mean disposition, he grew more and more sullen and savage until those who at first had avoided him simply because of his mean disposition now kept out of his way through fear, for his claws were long and his strength was great and his teeth were sharp. It didn't take him long to discover that there were few who did not fear him, and he cunningly contrived to increase this fear, for he had a feeling that the time might come when it would be of use to him.

"The time did come. As you know, there came a time when food was scarce, and everybody, or almost everybody, had hard work to get enough to keep alive. Mr. Wolverine didn't.

The fact is, Mr. Wolverine lived very well indeed. He simply reaped the reward of his patience in learning all about the ways of his neighbors, of his nimble wits and of the fear which he inspired. Instead of hunting for food himself, he depended on his neighbors to hunt for him. They didn't know they were hunting for him, but somehow whenever one of them had secured a good meal, Mr. Wolverine was almost sure to happen along. A growl from him was enough, and that meal was left in his possession.

"Knowing how scarce food was and the uncertainty of when he would get the next meal, Mr. Wolverine always made it a point on these occasions to stuff himself until it was a wonder his skin didn't burst. If there was more than he could eat, he would take a nap right there, and because of fear of him the rightful owner of the food would not dare take

what was left. When he awoke Mr. Wolverine would finish what remained.

"Those who secured more food than they could eat and tried to store away the rest found that no matter how cunningly they chose a hiding-place for it and covered their tracks, Mr. Wolverine was sure to find it. In fact, he made a business of robbing storehouses, and the habit of greediness became so strong that he would stuff himself at one storehouse and immediately start for another. When it did happen that he couldn't eat all he found and yet didn't want to stay until he could finish it, he would tear to bits all that remained and scatter it all about. You know I told you he had a mean disposition.

"Even when good times returned and there was no possible excuse for such greed, Mr. Wolverine continued to stuff himself until it seemed that instead of eating in order to live, as the rest of us do, he lived in order to eat. Of course it wasn't long before some one called him a glutton, and presently he was named Glutton, and no one called him anything else. Glutton by name and a glutton in habit he remained as long as he lived. Both name and habits he handed down to his children and they to their children. So it is that today there is no more cunning thief, no greedier rascal, and no one with a meaner disposition in all the Great Woods of the Far North than Glutton the Wolverine."

"Queer how a habit will stick, isn't it?" said Peter thoughtfully.

"Particularly a bad habit," added Honker.

VII

WHERE OLD MRS. 'GATOR MADE THE FIRST INCUBATOR

Peter Rabbit and Mrs. Quack the Mallard Duck are great friends. They have been great friends ever since Peter tried to help Mrs. Quack when she and Mr. Quack had spent a whole summer on a little pond hidden deep in the Green Forest because Mr. Quack had a broken wing and so he and Mrs. Quack simply couldn't keep on to their home in the Far North for which they had started. During that long summer Peter had become very well acquainted with them. In fact he visited them very often, for as you know, Peter is simply brimming over with curiosity, and there were wonderful things which Mr. and Mrs. Quack could tell him, for they are great travelers.

Now once, as Mrs. Quack was telling Peter about the far-away Southland where she and Mr. Quack and many other birds spend each winter, she mentioned Old Ally the 'Gator. People who live where he does call him just 'Gator, but you and I would call him Alligator.

At the mention of Old Ally, all Peter's curiosity was awakened, for Mrs. Quack had said that foolish young ducks sometimes mistook him for an old log floating in the water and didn't find out the difference until his great mouth flew open and he swallowed them whole. At that Peter's eyes threatened to pop right out of his head and every time he visited that little pond he pestered Mrs. Quack with questions about Old Ally the 'Gator and Mrs. 'Gator. It seemed as if he couldn't think of anything else. And when Mrs. Quack just happened to mention that little 'Gators are hatched from eggs just as her own children are, it was almost too much for Peter to believe.

"What?" he squealed, hopping up and down in excitement. "Do you mean to tell me that anything as big as Old Ally, big enough to swallow

you whole, can come from an egg? I don't believe it! Besides, only birds lay eggs."

"Quack, quack, quack, quack, quack, quack, quack,
Peter, you must take that back!" cried Mrs. Quack.

"Why must I take it back?" demanded Peter.

"Because as usual you've let your tongue run loose, and that is a bad habit, Peter. It certainly is a bad habit. How about the Snake family?"

"Oh!" said Peter, looking very foolish. "I forgot all about the Snakes. They do lay eggs."

"And how about Spotty the Turtle? Didn't he come from an egg?" persisted Mrs. Quack.

Peter looked more foolish than before, if that were possible. "Y-e-s," he replied slowly and reluctantly.

"Then don't be so quick to doubt a thing just because you've never seen it," retorted Mrs. Quack. "I've seen Mrs. 'Gator build her nest more than once, and I've seen her eggs, and I've seen the baby 'Gators; and what is more, I'm not in the habit of telling things that I don't know are so."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Quack." Peter was very humble. "I do indeed. Please forgive me. Is—is Mrs. 'Gator's nest at all like yours?"

Peter seemed so truly sorry for having doubted her that Mrs. Quack recovered her good nature at once. "No," said she, "it isn't. If I hadn't seen her make it, I wouldn't have known it was a nest. You see, one spring I got hurt so that I couldn't take my usual long journey to the Far North and had to spend the summer way down in the Southland where I always lived in the winter, and that is how I happened to learn about Mrs. 'Gator's nest and eggs and a lot of other things. Mrs. 'Gator is lazy, but she is smart. She's smart enough to make Mr. Sun do her work. What do you think of that?"

Right away Peter was all excitement. You see, that sounded as if there might be a story behind it. "I never have heard of such a thing!" he cried. "How did she learn to do such a smart thing as that? Of course I don't for a minute believe that she herself discovered a way to get Mr. Sun to work for her. Probably it was her ever-so-great-grandmother who first did it. Isn't that so, Mrs. Quack?"

Mrs. Quack nodded. "You've guessed it, Peter," said she. "It all happened way, way back in the days when the world was young."

"Tell me about it! Please, please tell me about it, Mrs. Quack, and the first chance I get, I'll do something for you," begged Peter.

Mrs. Quack carefully went over all her feathers to see that every one was in place, for she is very particular about how she looks. When she was quite satisfied, she turned to Peter, fidgeting on the bank.

"Way back in the days when the world was young," said she, "Old Mother Nature made the first Alligators before she made the first birds, or the first animals, so Old Ally and Mrs. 'Gator, who live way down south now, belong to a very old family and are proud of it. In the beginning of things there was very little dry land, as you may have heard, so old Mr. and Mrs. 'Gator, who of course were not old then, were made to live in the water with the fish. Old Mother Nature was experimenting then. She was planning to make a great deal more land, and she wanted living creatures on it, so she gave the 'Gators legs and feet instead of fins, and lungs to breathe air instead of gills for breathing in the water as fish do. Then, having many other things to attend to, she told them they would have to take care of themselves, and went about her business.

"It didn't take Mr. and Mrs. 'Gator long to discover that their legs were not of much use in the water, for they used their powerful tails for swimming. Then one day Mrs. 'Gator crawled out on land and right away discovered what those legs were for. She could go on dry land

while fishes could not. It didn't take her long to find out that nothing was quite so fine as a sun-bath, as she lay stretched out on the bank, so she and Mr. 'Gator spent most of their time on sunny days taking sun-baths.

"One day Old Mother Nature came along and whispered a wonderful secret to Mrs. 'Gator. 'I am going to give you some eggs,' whispered Old Mother Nature, 'some eggs of your very own, and if you watch over them and keep them warm, out of each one a baby 'Gator will some day creep. But if you let those eggs get cold, there will be no babies. Don't forget that you must keep them warm.'

"Old Mother Nature was as good as her word. She gave Mrs. 'Gator twenty beautiful white eggs, and Mrs. 'Gator was perfectly happy. Those eggs were the most precious things in all the Great World. It seemed as if she never would grow tired of looking at them and admiring them and of dreaming of the day when her babies should come out of them. It was very pleasant to lie there in the sun and dream of the babies to come from those wonderful eggs. Suddenly, right into the midst of those pleasant dreams, broke the memory of what Old Mother Nature had said about keeping those eggs warm. All in a twinkling happiness was turned to worry.

"'What can I do? What can I do?' Mrs. 'Gator kept saying over and over. 'However can I keep them warm when Mr. Sun goes to bed at night? Oh, dear! Oh, dear! My beautiful eggs never, never will turn to darling babies! What can I do?'

"All this time Mr. 'Gator was a great deal more interested in making himself comfortable than he was in those eggs. He had picked out a place where all day long Mr. Sun poured down his warmest rays, and he had dug a place to sprawl out in comfortably. The sand he had thrown in a pile at one side. When Mrs. 'Gator went to consult Mr. 'Gator about those precious eggs and her worries when the cool of evening had come, she happened to put one foot in that loose pile of sand, and she found

that while the sand on the outside was already cool, that down inside the pile was still warm. A clever idea came to her like a flash.

"First she sent Mr. 'Gator into the water to get his supper. Then she scooped a hole in that pile of warm sand, and in it she put her precious eggs and carefully covered them up with sand. When this was done she stretched out close by to keep watch and see that nothing disturbed those treasures. That was a very anxious night for Mrs. 'Gator. The sand on which she lay grew very cool. When at last day came and Mr. Sun once more began to shine, she opened that pile of sand and great was her joy to find that inside it was still warm. When Mr. 'Gator came crawling out the water to spend the day in that comfortable bed he had dug, she chased him away and was so cross that he went off grumbling and dug another bed. Mrs. 'Gator waited until Mr. Sun had made the sand very warm indeed, and then she made a great mound of it, and in the middle of it were her precious eggs. Night and day she kept guard, and all the time she worried lest those eggs should not be warm enough. Then one day twenty baby 'Gators dug their way out of that mound of sand. Yes, Sir, they did.

"All this happened long, long ago when the world was young, and ever since then 'Gators have lived only way down south, where it is very warm and where Mr. Sun will hatch their eggs for them. And today it is done just as I've told you, for I've seen with my own eyes Mrs. 'Gator build her nest, cover her eggs, and then lie around while Mr. Sun did the work for her. What do you think of that?"

"I think that if you hadn't told me that you had seen it with your own eyes, Mrs. Quack, I should think it a fairy story," replied Peter.

VIII

WHERE MR. QUACK GOT HIS WEBBED FEET

Twice every year, in the early spring and in the late fall, Peter Rabbit watches the Smiling Pool with a great deal of eagerness. Can you guess why? It is because two very good friends of Peter's are in the habit of stopping there for a few days for rest and refreshment before continuing the long journey which they are obliged to make. They are Mr. and Mrs. Quack, the Mallard Ducks. Peter is very fond of them, and when the time for their arrival draws near, Peter watches for them with a great deal of anxiety. You see they have told him something of the terrible dangers which they always encounter on these long journeys, and so Peter is always afraid that something terrible may have happened to them, and it is a great relief when he finds them swimming about in the Smiling Pool.

One reason Peter is so fond of Mr. and Mrs. Quack is because they always have a story for him. Sometimes it is a story of adventure, a tale of terrible danger and narrow escapes. Sometimes it is about their home in the far Northland, and again it is about the wonderful Southland where they spend the winter. But the story that Peter likes best is the one about where and how the Quack family got their funny, webbed feet. Mr. Quack doesn't think those feet funny at all, but Peter does. He never grows tired of watching Mr. and Mrs. Quack use them, because, you know, they are used so differently from other feet. And always he goes back to the dear Old Briar-patch with renewed admiration for the wisdom of Old Mother Nature.

Peter noticed those feet the first time he met Mr. and Mrs. Quack. He couldn't help but notice them. It happened that Mr. and Mrs. Quack were out on the bank of the Smiling Pool as Peter came hurrying over in his usual way, lipperty-lipperty-lip. They heard him coming and not knowing at first who it was they at once started for the water. Peter never

will forget the funny way in which they waddled. He never had seen anybody quite so awkward. But when they reached the water he forgot to laugh. He simply stared open-mouthed in astonishment. You see there they were as graceful as they had been awkward on land.

Afterward, when Peter had become acquainted with them and they were the best of friends, he ventured to speak of their queer feet.

"Do you know," said he, "you have the most interesting feet of anybody I know of. They are so broad that the first time I saw them I couldn't believe my own eyes. I didn't suppose anybody had such broad feet. I suppose there is some special reason why they are so broad and why your legs are so short. Do you know how Mother Nature happened to give you feet so different from the feet of other birds, Mr. Quack?"

Mr. Quack chuckled. "I tell you what it is, Peter," said he, "if you'll tell me why it is you have such long hind legs and such a funny short tail, I'll tell you why it is that Mrs. Quack and I have such broad feet, though I must confess that I don't see anything odd about them."

Peter agreed at once. He told Mr. and Mrs. Quack all about what happened to his grandfather a thousand times removed, the very first Rabbit, way back when the world was young, and how ever since then all Rabbits have had long hind legs and short tails. When he had finished Mr. Quack thoughtfully scratched his handsome green head, looked at his reflection in the Smiling Pool to make sure that he was looking his very best, looked behind to see that the feathers in the tip of his tail had the proper curl, and then gazed off over the Green Meadows with a far-away look in his eyes as if he were looking way back to the time he was to tell about. At last, just as Peter Rabbit was beginning to lose patience Mr. Quack began.

"It must be, Peter," said he, "that my great-great-ever-so-great-grandfather lived just about the same time as your great-great-ever-so-great-grandfather, way back in the days when the world was young.

Perhaps they knew each other. Perhaps they were acquainted just as you and I are now. Anyway, according to what has been handed down in the family, Grandfather Quack was very much such a looking fellow as I am now, except in the matter of his bill and feet. His bill was not broad like mine but more like the bills of other birds, and his feet were like the feet of Mr. Grouse and Bob White. They were made for scratching, and there was nothing between the toes. You see, Old Mother Nature was experimenting. She made everybody a little different from everybody else and then started them forth in the Great World to shift for themselves and to find out what they really needed that they hadn't got.

"Old Mr. Quack, my great-great-ever-so-great-grandfather, soon discovered one thing, and that was that his legs were too short for him to get around very fast. When he walked, everybody laughed at him. When he tried to run, they laughed harder than ever. He didn't mind this so very much, though he did a little. Nobody likes to be laughed at, especially when it is because of something they cannot help. But what he did mind was the fact that his neighbors could run about so much faster than he that they got all the best of the food, and quite often he went hungry.

"One day he happened to be sitting on the bank of the Smiling Pool, thinking the matter over and wondering what he had best do, when Mr. Fox stole up behind him and startled him so that he lost his balance and tumbled down the bank into the water. This frightened him more than ever, and he flapped about and squawked and squawked and flapped until Mr. Fox nearly split his sides laughing at him. And when he was quite out of breath, Mr. Quack discovered that he was making all this fuss for nothing. He didn't sink, but floated on the water, and what was more the water didn't get under his feathers at all. When he tried to walk, of course he couldn't, and he had a funny feeling because his feet didn't touch anything and felt so very useless. But he kept moving them back and forth, and pretty soon he discovered that he moved ahead. Of course he moved very slowly, because his feet were not made for use in the

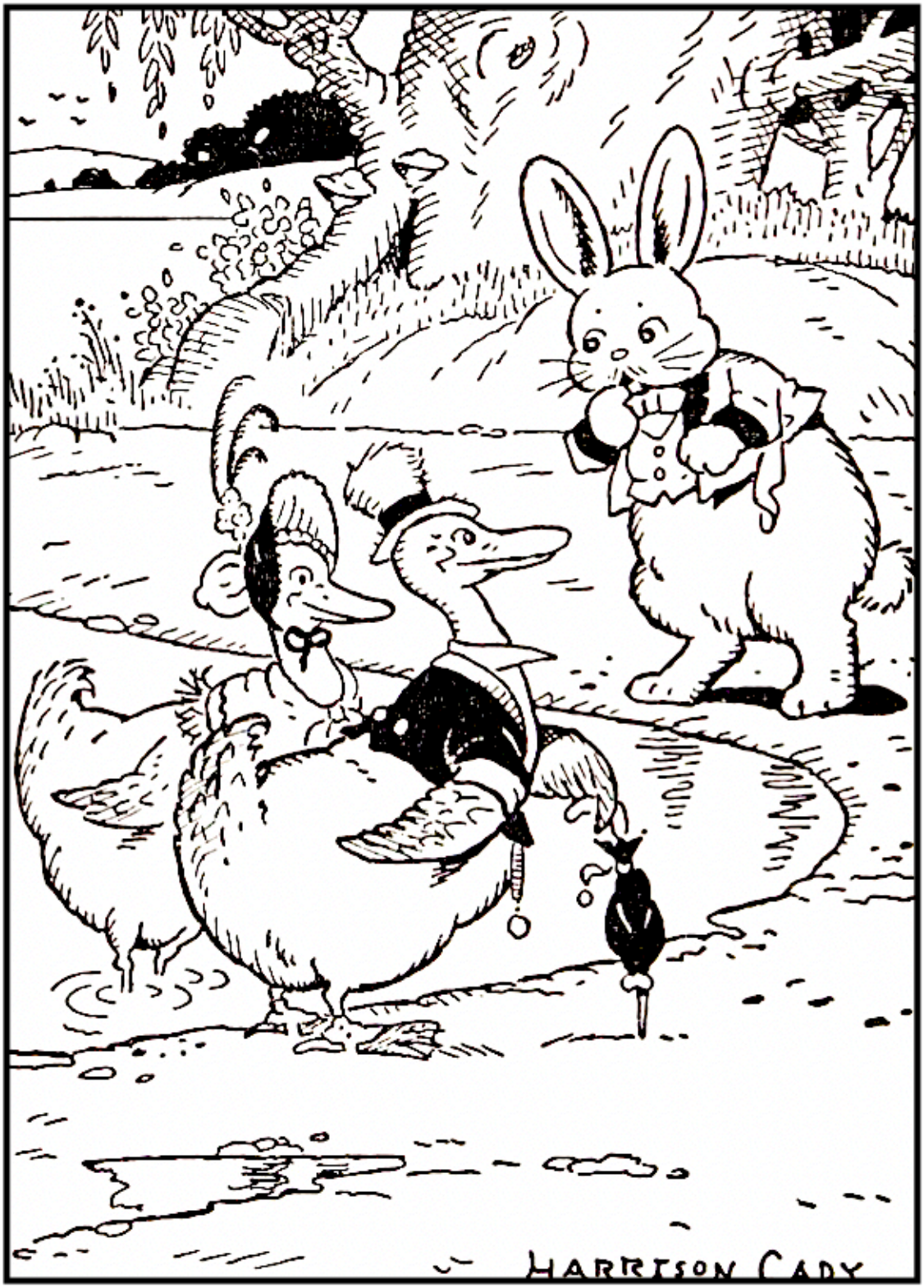
water, but he moved, and that was enough. He knew then that he could get back to land. Then he tried his wings and he found that he could rise into the air from the water quite as easily as from the land. Right then and there all fear of the water left him. In fact, he liked it.

"Little by little, Grandfather Quack began to understand that he had made a great discovery. He had discovered the safest place in all the Great World for him. Out on the water he was safe from Mr. Fox and Mr. Wolf and all the other four-footed hunters. So he took to spending most of his time on the water or near it. When he wanted a nap, he would hide among the rushes that grew in the water. 'If only I didn't have to leave the water for food!' sighed Grandfather Quack. ‘If only I could find food here, I would never leave the water.'

"At the time he was squatting at the very edge of the Smiling Pool. Presently he noticed a funny water bug crawling on the bottom where the water was only an inch or two deep. 'I wonder if that fellow is good to eat,' thought he, and almost without thinking he plunged his head under water and caught the bug. It was good. Grandfather Quack at once started to look for more, and while doing this he discovered that there were a great many seeds from the rushes scattered about in the mud at the bottom of the Smiling Pool, and that these also were good to eat. Then quite by accident he got hold of a tender root in the mud and found that this was especially good.

"This was enough for Grandfather

Quack. He had found that he could get plenty to eat without leaving the Smiling Pool. Moreover, he didn't have to share it with anybody, because there was no one else who thought of looking for food there. He knew when he was well off. So Grandfather Quack grew fat and was happy. The only things that bothered him were the slowness with which he had to pick up seeds, one at a time, and the slowness with which he could paddle about, for you couldn't really call it swimming. But in spite of these things he was happy and made the best of his lot.



PETER NOTICED THE THOSE FEET THE FIRST TIME HE MET MR. & MRS. QUACK

"One day he tugged and tugged at a root with his head under water. When at last he had to bring his head up for a breath, whom should he discover but Old Mother Nature watching him from the opposite bank. ‘Come over here, Mr. Quack, and tell me all about it,' she commanded.

"Grandfather Quack started across the Smiling Pool, but because his feet were not made for swimming, it took him a long time to get there. Old Mother Nature smiled as she watched him. 'You look better on the water than you do on land,' said she. 'In fact, I believe that is just where you belong. Now tell me how you happened to take to the water.'

"Grandfather Quack told her the whole story and how Old Mother Nature did laugh when he described how frightened he was when he fell in that time. Suddenly she reached out and caught him by the bill. 'I don't think much of that bill for poking about in the mud,' said she. 'How will this do?' She let go, and Grandfather Quack found he had a broad bill just suited for getting food out of the mud. Then Old Mother Nature bade him hold forth first one foot and then the other. Between the toes she stretched a tough skin clear to the toe nails. 'Now let me see you swim,' said she.

"Grandfather Quack tried. He kicked one foot and then the other, and to his great joy he shot along swiftly. When he drew his feet back for another kick his toes closed together, and so his feet came through the water easily. But when he kicked back they were wide spread, and the skin between them pushed against the water, and drove him ahead. It was wonderful! It was splendid! He hurried over to Old Mother Nature, and with tears of joy in his eyes he thanked her. And from that day to this members of my family have had the same broad bills and webbed feet, and have lived on the water," concluded Mr. Quack.

IX

WHERE THUNDERFOOT THE BISON GOT HIS HUMP

Thunderfoot the Bison, often called Buffalo, is not a handsome fellow, as you very well know if you have seen him or a picture of him. His head is carried low, very near the ground, and on his shoulders is a great hump. No, you wouldn't call him handsome. You would hardly call him good-looking even. In fact, you would, I suspect, call him homely. Certainly there is nothing about him to suggest pride. Yet according to the story Digger the Badger once told Peter Rabbit, pride and nothing less was the cause of that big hump which makes Thunderfoot appear so clumsy and homely.

Peter Rabbit, as you know, is very fond of stories. In this respect he is very like some other folks I know. Anyway, he never misses a chance for a story if he can help it. He had discovered that Digger the Badger and Old Man Coyote, both of whom had come to the Green Meadows from the Far West, were full of stories about their neighbors of the distant prairies, folk whom Peter never had seen. Sometimes when he had nothing else to do, Old Man Coyote would come over to the dear Old Briar-patch and tell stories to Peter, who sat safe behind the brambles. Perhaps Old Man Coyote hoped that Peter would become so interested that he would forget and come out of the dear Old Briar-patch. But Peter never did.

But most of the stories of the people of the Far West Peter got from Digger the Badger because, you see, he wasn't afraid to go beg for them. He knew that Digger couldn't catch him if he wanted to, and so when Grandfather Frog hadn't a story for him, Peter would go tease Digger for one. It was thus that he heard about Thunderfoot the Bison and where he got that great hump of his.

"I don't suppose," said Peter, "that there are any very big people out there on those prairies where you used to live any more than there are here on the Green Meadows. All the very big people seem to prefer to live in the Green Forest."

"It is that way now, I must admit," said Digger the Badger, "but it wasn'tso in the old days, in the good old days when there were no terrible guns, and Thunderfoot and his followers shook the ground with their feet." Digger shook his head sadly.

Instantly Peter pricked up his ears. "Who was Thunderfoot?" he demanded.

Digger looked at Peter with such a look of pity for Peter's ignorance that Peter felt almost ashamed. "He doesn't live here and never did, so far as I have heard, so how should I know anything about him?" he added a wee bit defiantly.

"If that's the case," replied Digger, "it is time you learned about the Lord of the Prairies."

"But I want to know about Thunderfoot first!" cried Peter. "You can tell me about the Lord of the Prairies another time."

"Were you born stupid or have you grown so?" asked Digger impatiently. Then without waiting for an answer he added: "Thunderfoot was the Lord of the Prairies. He ruled over the Wide Prairies just as Old King Bear ruled in the Green Forest. He ruled by might. He ruled because no one dared deny him the right to rule. He ruled because of his great size and his great strength. And all who lived on the Wide Prairies looked up to him and admired him and bowed before him and paid him the utmost respect. When he and his followers ran the earth shook, and the noise was like thunder, and everybody hastened to get out of the way and to warn his neighbors, crying: 'Here comes my Lord of the Prairies! Make way! Make way!' And truly Thunderfoot and his followers were a magnificent

sight, so my great-grandfather told me, and he had it from his great-grandfather, who was told so by his great-grandfather, who saw it all with his own eyes. But that was in the days before Thunderfoot's head was brought low, and he was given the great hump which none of his descendants have ever been able to get rid of."

"Tell me about that hump and where my Lord of the Prairies, Thunderfoot the Bison, got it!" begged Peter, with shining eyes. That there was a story he hadn't the least doubt.

Digger the Badger flattened himself out on the ground, and into his eyes crept a dreamy, far-away look as if he were seeing things a great, great way off. "Way back In the days when the world was young, so my great-grandfather said," he began, “Thunderfoot, he first Bison, was given the Wide Prairies for a kingdom by Old Mother Nature and strode forth to take possession. Big was he, the biggest of all living creatures thereabouts. Strong was he with a strength none cared to test. And he was handsome. He held his head proudly. All who lived on the Wide Prairies admired him with a great admiration and hastened to pay homage to him.

"For a long time he ruled wisely. All the other people brought their disputes to him to be settled, and so wisely did he decide them that the fame of his wisdom spread even beyond the Wide Prairies and was talked about in the Green Forest. The humblest of his subjects could come to him freely and be sure of a hearing and that justice would be done. Big as he was and mighty as he was, he took the greatest care never to forget the rights of others.

"But there came a time when flattery turned his head, as the saying is. Mr. Coyote and Mr. Fox were the chief flatterers, and in all the Great World there were no smoother tongues than theirs. They never lost an opportunity to tell him how handsome he was, and how mighty he was, and how they admired him and looked up to him, and how unequaled was his wisdom. You see, being themselves dishonest and mischief-

makers, they frequently were in trouble with their neighbors and would have to appear before Thunderfoot for judgment. Even when it went against them they praised the wisdom of it, admitting that they were in the wrong and begging forgiveness, all of which was very flattering to Thunderfoot.

"Little by little, without knowing it, he yielded to the flattery of Mr. Coyote and Mr. Fox. He liked to hear the pleasant things they said. Little by little it became easier to find them in the right than in the wrong when they were accused of wronging their neighbors. Of course they flattered him still more. They hinted to him that it was beneath the dignity of one so big and strong and handsome to take notice of the very small and humble people like Mr. Meadow Mouse and Mr. Toad and Mr. Meadow Lark and others of his subjects.

"Gradually the little people of the Wide Prairies began to notice a change in Thunderfoot. He became proud and vain. He openly boasted of his strength and fine appearance. When he met them he passed them haughtily, not seeing them at all, or at least appearing not to. No longer did he regard the rights of others. No longer did he watch out not to crush the nest of Mrs. Meadow Lark or to step on the babies of Danny Meadow Mouse. It came about that when the thunder of his feet was heard, those with homes on the ground shivered with fright and hoped that my Lord of the Prairies would not come their way.

"One day, as he raced over the Wide Prairies for no reason but that he felt like running, Mr. Meadow Lark flew to meet him. Mr. Meadow Lark was in great distress. 'Turn aside, my Lord!' he begged. 'Turn aside, my Lord of the Prairies, for before you lies my nest with four precious eggs, and I fear you will step on them!'

"Thunderfoot the Bison, Lord of the Wide Prairies, tossed his head.

'If you will build your nest where it can be trodden on, you can't expect me to look out for it,' said he. 'If anything so unfortunate happens to it, it is your own fault, and you mustn't blame me.' And he neither looked down to see where he was putting his feet nor turned aside so much as an inch. On he galloped, and presently with a cry of fright out from beneath his feet flew Mrs. Meadow Lark, and at the very next step he trod on the little nest in the grass and crushed the four eggs.

"Mr. Coyote, who was racing beside him on one side and saw what had happened, grinned. Mr. Fox, who was racing beside him on the other side and saw what had happened, grinned. Seeing them grin, Thunderfoot himself grinned. Thus grinning heartlessly, they continued to run until they came to a place where Mother Nature walked among the flowers of the Wide Prairies. Mr. Coyote and Mr. Fox, whose heads were not held so high, saw her in time to put their tails between their legs and slink away. Thunderfoot, holding his head high, failed to see her until he was so close to her that it was with difficulty he stopped before running her down.

"'My Lord of the Prairies seems in fine spirits,' said Mother Nature softly. 'Is all well with my Lord?'

"Thunderfoot tossed his head proudly. 'All is well,' said he.

"'I am sorry that others cannot say as much,' replied Mother Nature, and all the softness was gone from her voice, and it was sharp. 'I seem to hear the sobs of a broken-hearted little Meadow Lark,' she continued. 'Little though she be and humble, she is as much to me as is my Lord of the Prairies who has made her suffer.'

"Stooping swiftly, Mother Nature picked up her staff and with it struck Thunderfoot on the neck, so that his head was brought low, and in fear of another blow he humped his shoulders up. 'Thus shall you be, still big, still strong, but hump-shouldered and carrying your head low in shame, no longer Lord of the Prairies, until such time as you restore to

Mrs. Meadow Lark the eggs you destroyed,' said she, and turned her back on him.

"It was so. From that day on, Thunderfoot ceased to rule over the Wide Prairies. He was hump-shouldered and he carried his head low, looking and looking for the eggs he never could find to restore to Mrs. Meadow Lark. And though his children and his children's children became many, there never was one without the hump or who ceased to carry his head low in shame," concluded Digger the Badger.

X

WHERE LIMBERHEELS GOT HIS LONG TAIL.

Have you ever seen Limberheels the Jumping Mouse when he was in a hurry? If you have, very likely the first time you felt very much as Peter Rabbit did when he saw Limberheels for the first time. He was hopping along across the Green Meadows with nothing much on his mind when from right under his wobbly nose something shot into the air over the tops of the grasses for eight or ten feet and then down and out of sight. Peter rubbed his eyes.

"Did I see it, or didn't I? And if I did, what was it?" gasped Peter.

A squeaky little laugh answered him. "You saw it all right, Peter, but it isn't polite to call any one it. He would be quite provoked if he had heard you. That was my cousin, Limberheels," replied a voice quite as squeaky as the laugh had been.

Peter turned to see the bright eyes of Danny Meadow Mouse twinkling at him from the entrance to a tiny little path that joined the bigger path in which Peter was sitting.

"Hello, Danny!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to tell me that was a relative of yours? Since when have any of your relatives taken to flying?"

Danny chuckled. "He wasn't flying," he retorted. "He just jumped, that was all." Danny chuckled again, for he knows that Peter considers himself quite a jumper and is inclined to be a bit jealous of any one else who pretends to jump save his cousin, Jumper the Hare.

"Jumped!" snorted Peter. "Jumped! Do you expect me to believe that any Mouse can jump like that? I didn't get a good look at that fellow, but whoever he is I tell you he flew. Nobody can jump like that."

Danny chuckled again. "Wait a minute, Peter," said he. He disappeared, and Peter waited. He waited one minute, two minutes, three minutes, and then suddenly Danny poked his head out from the grass beside the path. "Here he is, Peter," said he, coming wholly out into the path. "Let me introduce my cousin, Limberheels."

As he spoke the grass beside him rustled, and out crept some one beside whom Danny Meadow Mouse looked big, clumsy and homely. One glance was enough to tell Peter that the stranger was a sure-enough member of the Mouse family, but such a member as he never had seen before. He was trim and slender. He wore a reddish-brown coat with a white waistcoat. But the things that made Peter stare very impolitely were his tail and his legs. His tail was nearly twice as long as his body, slim and tapering, and his hind legs were very long, while his fore legs were short. It took only one glance to convince Peter that here was a born jumper. Any one built like that *must* jump.

"You two must become acquainted and be friends," continued Danny Meadow Mouse. "Peter is one of my best friends, Limberheels. He wouldn't hurt a flea. I'm sure that from now on he will be one of your best friends."

"I'll be happy to," said Peter promptly. "Danny has been telling me what a wonderful jumper you are. Would you mind showing me how you jump? I guess you jumped right in front of me a few minutes ago, but I was so surprised that I didn't really see you."

"I guess I did," replied Limberheels rather timidly. "You see, I didn't hear you coming until you were almost on top of me, and then I didn't know who it was so I got away as quickly as I could. I'll be ever so glad to have you for a friend and next time I won't run away."

"Show him how you can jump," interrupted Danny Meadow Mouse. "He wouldn't believe me when I told him that you didn't fly."

Limberheels grinned rather sheepishly. "Of course I didn't fly," said he. "No animal can fly but Flitter the Bat. I just jumped like this."

With a tremendous spring from his long hind legs Limberheels leaped, while Peter Rabbit stared, his mouth wide open with astonishment. He hadn't dreamed that any one could jump so far in proportion to his size as this slim, trim little cousin of Danny's. Later, after Limberheels had jumped for Peter's benefit until he was tired and had gone to hunt for a lunch of grass seeds, Peter wanted to know all about Limberheels.

"Never in my life have I seen such jumping," he declared. "And never have I seen such a tail. I thought Whitefoot the Wood Mouse had a fine tail, but it doesn't compare with that of Limberheels."

"It is a fine tail," replied Danny, whose own tail, as you know, is very short.

"It is a fine tail," he repeated rather wistfully. "Would you like to hear where he got it?"

"I know," retorted Peter with a grin. "He got it from his father, who got it from his father, and so on way back to the days when the world was young." Then, seeing a look of disappointment on Danny's face, and eager for a story as usual, he added: "But I would like to know how such a tail as that came in the family."

Danny brightened up at once. "It's funny how things come about in this world," he began. "The great-great-ever-so-great-grandfather of Limberheels, the first one, you know, was quite an ordinary Mouse when Old Mother Nature made him and started him out to make his way in the Great World. He was little, one of the smallest of the family, and his tail was short, no longer than mine. His hind legs were like those of all his relatives. He ran about just as his relatives did. He was so small and kept out of sight so much that he didn't even have a name. There was nothing about him to suggest a name.

"For a long time he was contented and happy. Then one day he happened to see Mr. Hare jump. It seemed to him the most wonderful thing in the world that any one should be able to jump like that. So he began to spend most of his spare time where he could watch Mr. Hare. One day Old Mother Nature happened along unseen by him, as he was watching Mr. Hare jump, and she overheard him say very, very wistfully, 'How I wish I could jump like that! I wish I had long hind legs like Mr. Hare.'

"Old Mother Nature's kindly eyes twinkled. 'That's easily arranged,' said she. 'If you think long hind legs will be of more use to you than the ones you have, you shall have them.'

"The next morning when little Mr. Mouse awoke, he discovered that in the night something had happened to his hind legs. They were very long and strong, regular jumping legs like those of Mr. Hare. Of course he was in such a great hurry to try them that he couldn't wait for his breakfast. He began by making little short hops, and in no time at all he was getting about splendidly. At last he got up his courage to try a long jump. Up in the air he shot, and then something happened. Yes, Sir, something happened. He couldn't kept his balance. He turned two or three somersaults and landed on his back.

"'I guess,' said he to himself, 'I've got to *learn* to make long jumps.' So he kept trying and trying, but always with the same result—he never knew when, where, or how he was going to land. As long as he made short jumps he had no trouble, but every time he tried a long jump he lost his balance, and try as he would he couldn't discover why. So at last he gave up trying and contented himself with short jumps. Finally Old Mother Nature came that way again.

"'How do you like your long hind legs?' she asked.

"'Very much, thank you,' replied little Mr. Mouse politely.

"'Let me see you jump,' said Old Mother Nature.

"Little Mr. Mouse made half a dozen little jumps. They were not much more than hops. 'You don't call that jumping, do you?' laughed Old Mother Nature. 'With such long, strong legs as I've given you, you ought to be one of the best jumpers anywhere about. Now let me see you make a long jump.'

"Little Mr. Mouse tried his best to think of some excuse, but he couldn't. So he made a long jump, and the usual thing happened—he turned two or three somersaults and landed on his back. Old Mother Nature looked astonished. Then she laughed until she had to hold her sides. 'Do it again,' she commanded.

"With the most shamefaced air that you can imagine, little Mr. Mouse jumped again. Old Mother Nature watched him closely. 'Come here to me,' said she as he scrambled to his feet after his tumble. 'It's all my fault,' said she kindly, as he obeyed her. 'It was very stupid of me. What you need is a long tail to balance you on a long jump. That short tail is all right for short jumps, but it won't do for long jumps. It won't do at all. I should have thought of that when I made your legs long.'

"She reached down and took hold of the tip of that little short tail and drew it out until it was long, almost twice as long as the body of little Mr. Mouse. 'Now jump,' she commanded, 'and jump with all your might.'

"A little fearfully but with the beginning of a little hope Mr. Mouse jumped with all his might. Away he sailed straight and true and landed lightly on his feet so far from where he had left the ground that he could hardly believe his own eyes as he looked back. Mother Nature was smiling.

"'There you are, Mr. Limberheels. I guess that that will make you quite the most wonderful jumper of all my children,' said she.

"And so it was that little Mr. Mouse, all at one time, became possessed of a long tail, a name, and the ability to out jump all his neighbors,"

concluded Danny Meadow Mouse. "Do you know," he added wistfully, "sometimes I envy my cousin Limberheels."

"I envy him myself," declared Peter.

XI

WHERE OLD MR. GOBBLER GOT THE STRUTTING HABIT

Peter Rabbit never will forget the first time he saw Big Tom Gobbler. It was very early one spring morning, when Peter was not yet old enough to have made the acquaintance of all the people who live in the Green Forest, and when it seemed as if the chief thing in life with him was to satisfy his curiosity about the ways of the Great World. Several times when he had been hopping along, lipperty-lipperty-lip, through the Green Forest just after sun-up, he had heard a strange sound quite unlike any other of all the many sounds his long ears had learned to know. He knew that it was the voice of some one who lived in the Green Forest, but though he had looked and looked he had been unable to discover the owner of that voice.

On this particular morning Peter happened to be sitting under some ferns on the edge of a little open space among the trees when again he heard that strange voice. It seemed to come from somewhere back in the woods in the very direction from which he had just come. "Gobble-obble-obble!" said the voice, and again a moment later "Gobble-obble-obble!"

Peter was just preparing to go back to see if he could find the owner of that voice when the noise of great wings caused him to look up just in time to see a bigger bird than he ever had even dreamed of coming swiftly over the tree-tops. With his eyes popping out and his mouth wide open with astonishment, Peter saw the great bird set its wings and sail down into the little opening on the edge of which Peter was sitting. The instant this great bird was on the ground, he stood as still as if he were made of stone, his long neck stretched up. Only the shine of a pair of the sharpest eyes Peter ever had seen showed that he was alive.

Peter held his breath, and it was so still that you could have heard a leaf drop had you been there. When at last the stranger moved, it was his head only. He turned it suddenly to the right and a moment later to the left. It was plain that he was listening for suspicious sounds. All the time his bright eyes searched the edge of the opening until Peter, although he was well hidden, felt that he must be seen. At last, satisfied that all was safe, the stranger drew in his neck and began to walk about, pecking at the ground here and there and swallowing what he picked up, though what it was Peter couldn't tell.

A sound seemed to catch the stranger's quick ears, for he stopped and stared very hard at a little clump of brush. Peter stared at it too. At first he saw nothing, but presently he saw a head poked out, and this also was a stranger. Peter glanced at the big stranger in the opening, and for a minute he wondered if it could be that something was wrong with his eyes. Never had he seen such a change in anybody. This stranger didn't look like the same bird at all. He was swelled up until Peter was afraid he would burst. His tail was spread out like a great fan. His head was laid back on his humped shoulders. His wings were dropped until the stiffly spread feathers brushed the ground. His head and neck were as red as blood, and there were no feathers on either. All the feathers of his body were ruffed out so that the sun shone on them and made them shimmer and shine in colors that seemed to constantly change.

Back and forth in front of the brush from which the other stranger was peeping very shyly this great bird strutted. He would stand still so that the sun would fall full on his shining coat and show it off to the best advantage, and at the same time he would draw in a great deal of air and then puff it out all at once. Then he would walk a few steps, turn, drag his wings on the ground to make them rustle, wheel, and run a few steps. Never had Peter seen such vanity, such conceit, such imposing, puffed-up pride. He watched until he grew tired, and then he stole away and hurried over to the Smiling Pool to tell Grandfather Frog all about it and ask who these strangers were.

"Chug-a-rum!" exclaimed Grandfather Frog, opening his big mouth very wide to laugh at Peter and his excitement. "That was Big Tom Gobbler, and he was doing all that for the benefit of Mrs. Gobbler, who was hiding in that brush. It was her head you saw. Big Tom is the most conceited fellow in the Green Forest. He dearly loves to strut. He is just like his father and his grandfather and his great-grandfather. The Gobblers never have gotten over strutting since Old

Mr. Gobbler, the first of the family, got the habit."

"Tell me about it. Please, Grandfather Frog, tell me about it," begged Peter. "How did Old Mr. Gobbler get the habit?"

Grandfather Frog chuckled. "He got it from admiring his own reflection in a pool of water," said he. "You see, in those days way back when the world was young, people had more time to form habits than they do now. With plenty to eat and little to do, they had more time to think about themselves than they do now. Old Mr. Gobbler soon discovered that he was the biggest of all the birds in that part of the Great World where he lived, and this discovery was, I suspect, the beginning of his vanity. Then one day as he was walking along, he came to a little pool of water. It was very clear, and there wasn't a ripple on the surface. There for the first time Mr. Gobbler saw his reflection. The more he looked, the better he liked his own appearance. He spread his tail just to see how it would look in the water. Then he puffed himself out and strutted.

"'There is nobody to compare with me,' thought he, and strutted more than ever.

"After that he used to steal away every day to admire himself in that little pool of water. He tried new ways of strutting and of puffing himself out. After a while he was no longer content to admire himself. He wanted others to admire him. So the first chance he got he began to strut and show off all his grand airs before Mrs. Gobbler. At first she paid no attention to him. At least that is the

way she appeared. She would turn her back on him and walk off into the bushes. This made Old Mr. Gobbler very angry until he discovered that she would tiptoe back and watch him admiringly when she thought he didn't know it. That made him strut all the more.

"At first all the neighbors used to gather around and admire him and tell him how handsome he was until his head was quite turned, as the saying is, and he spent most of his time strutting and showing off. Then he took to bragging and boasting that there was no bird to compare with him. Thus he became quite unbearable, and all his neighbors would turn their backs on him when they saw him coming. Only Mrs. Gobbler continued to watch in secret and to admire him.

"Now in those days Mr. Gobbler didn't have a red head and neck. One day Old Mother Nature happened along when Mr. Gobbler was strutting and boasting how big and brave he was. He didn't see her, and she watched him quietly for a few minutes. Then she slipped away and hunted up Mr. Wolf.

"'I want you to steal over where Mr. Gobbler is strutting,' said she, 'and suddenly spring out at him as if you intended to catch him.'

"Mr. Wolf grinned and trotted off to do her bidding. He found Mr. Gobbler swelled up until he looked as if he must burst, and bragging to Mrs. Gobbler.

"'I'm the biggest of all the birds,' bragged Mr. Gobbler. 'I'm afraid of no one. While you have me with you, my dear, you have nothing in all the Great World to fear.'

"Just then out sprang Mr. Wolf with all his long, sharp teeth showing. Mr. Gobbler gave a yelp of fright. He lost his swelled-up appearance as suddenly as a bubble flattens out when it is pricked. With a frantic beating of his wings he took to the air. Being in such a fright, he didn't see where he was going, and struck his head against a sharp twig, which tore the skin, for there were no feathers to protect it, and made it bleed.

The blood ran all over his head and down his neck, though he really was hardly hurt at all. From the top of a tall tree he looked down. There stood Old Mother Nature, looking up at him.

"'Mr. Gobbler,' said she, 'you have acquired a bad habit, a very bad habit. Hereafter, whenever you become vain and strut, your head and neck shall become as red as they now are, as a reminder to you and all who see you of how silly it is to be vain and boastful.'

"And so it was. And so it is with Big Tom Gobbler to this day. There is nothing in the world more foolish than vanity," concluded Grandfather Frog.

XII

WHERE SEEK-SEEK GOT HIS PRETTY COAT

Peter Rabbit never will forget the first time he saw Seek-Seek the Ground Squirrel, often wrongly called Gopher or Gopher Squirrel, but whose real name is Spermophile, which means seed eater. Peter won't forget that meeting, because of the funny mistake he made and the foolish feeling he had as a result of it. You see, Peter didn't know that there was such a person as Seek-Seek. He was hopping along across the Green Meadows in his usual happy-go-lucky way when, right in front of him, he saw what at first he took to be a stake, a small stake, driven in the ground. But as he drew nearer, it suddenly moved. It wasn't a stake at all, but a very lively small person in a striped coat who had been sitting up very straight and motionless.

"Hello, Striped Chipmunk! What are you doing way out here so far from the old stone wall?" exclaimed Peter.

The small person in the striped coat whirled and faced Peter with snapping eyes. "Don't call me Striped Chipmunk, and don't call me Gopher!" said he very fiercely for so small a person. "I am neither one. I am Seek-Seek the Ground Squirrel, and I'll thank you to call me by my own name. I am getting everlastingly tired of being called the names of other people."

Peter looked very foolish. "I beg your pardon," said he. "I do indeed. I'm sorry. Perhaps you don't know it, but you look very much like Striped Chipmunk, who is one of my best friends. You look so much like him that I thought you must be him. I wonder if you are related to him."

"Certainly I'm related to him, or he is related to me, whichever way you please to put it," snapped Seek-Seek. "We are cousins. But he is a Rock Squirrel, and I am a Ground Squirrel which is altogether different. You don't find me where there are rocks and stones in the way if I know it.

Besides, if you used your eyes, you would see that we are not dressed alike either. Just because we both happen to wear stripes is no reason why we should be mistaken for each other."

Peter looked at Seek-Seek more closely than he had, and at once he made a discovery. "Why!" he exclaimed, "your coat has more stripes than Striped Chipmunk's has, hasn't it?"

"I should hope so," retorted Seek-Seek.

"And it has little rows of spots, too!" cried Peter. "If I had noticed those spots at first, I wouldn't have made such a foolish mistake. I do believe that your coat is prettier than Striped Chipmunk's, and I had thought his as pretty as a coat can be."

Seek-Seek looked rather pleased, though he tried not to. "Huh!" he sniffed. "Of course it's prettier. It took you a long time to find it out. I wouldn't trade coats with Striped Chipmunk or anybody else of my acquaintance."

"Neither would I if I were in your place," declared Peter. "I wish Old Mother Nature had given me a coat like that." He said this so wistfully that Seek-Seek, who had started to laugh, turned his head so that Peter might not know it. "I'm afraid it wouldn't look so well on one as big as you," he replied. "Anyway, you wouldn't be able to hide from your enemies as you can now."

"That's so," said Peter thoughtfully. "I would be easily seen in a coat like that, for a fact. I hadn't thought of that. I guess Old Mother Nature knows best. I—I wonder how she ever happened to think of a coat like yours."

Seek-Seek chuckled. He had quite forgotten that he had felt offended because Peter had mistaken him for his cousin, Striped Chipmunk. He enjoyed Peter's admiration of his coat. He is naturally rather talkative, and like most folks he enjoyed talking about himself.

"This coat," said he, "has been in the family a very great while. Of course, I don't mean this particular coat that I am wearing," he hastened to add, as he saw Peter beginning to grin. "I mean this style of coat has been in the family a very long time. My father was dressed just as I am. So was his father and—"

"I know," interrupted Peter. "You were going to say that so were all your grandfathers way back to the days when the world was young, and Old Mother Nature made the very first one of your family. It's funny to me that all the interesting things happened such a long time ago. Now wasn't that what you were going to say?"

Seek-Seek admitted that it was, and looked a little disappointed that Peter had guessed it. But a second later he felt better when Peter asked him very politely but very earnestly for the story of how the first Ground Squirrel got such a pretty coat. "There is a story. I know there is a story," declared Peter. "Won't you tell it to me please, Seek-Seek?"

Now Peter didn't want to hear it any more than Seek-Seek wanted to tell it, so while Peter squatted down comfortably, Seek-Seek sat up very straight and began the story.

"First of all, you must know that Seek-Seek is an old family name which has been handed down just as the pattern of my coat has been. The very first of all my great-great-grandfathers was called Seek-Seek. When Old Mother Nature made Seek-Seek she must have had two families in mind at one time, the Marmot family and the Squirrel family, for she made him a little like each, so that in his looks he sort of fitted in between the two. Mother Nature told him that he was a member of the Squirrel family and set him free to find a place for himself in the Great World.

"Now it didn't take Grandfather Seek-Seek long to find out that though he might be a member of the Squirrel family, Old Mother Nature had failed to furnish him with the right kind of claws for climbing trees, as most of his cousins did. True, he could climb a little, but it was not easy,

"Don't call me Striped Chipmunk, and don't call me Gopher!" said he.

and he felt anything but comfortable off the ground. But if those claws were of little use for climbing they were splendid tools for digging, just as are the claws of the Marmot family. So Old Mother Nature must have been thinking of the Marmots when she fashioned those claws.

"At first Seek-Seek wandered about trying to find a place for himself in the Great World. Being a Squirrel, he tried to live as did his cousins, Mr. Red Squirrel and Mr. Gray Squirrel, but on account of those claws he didn't make much of a success of it. Then one day he met Mr. Chipmunk. They stopped and stared at each other in surprise because, you know, their coats were so much alike. At that time Seek-Seek was wearing plain stripes, just as Striped Chipmunk does to this day.

"'What do you mean by stealing my coat?' demanded Mr. Chipmunk angrily.

"'I was just about to ask you the same question,' retorted Seek-Seek.

"Mr. Chipmunk had a sharp reply right on the tip of his tongue, but he checked it just in time. 'What's the use of quarreling over something neither of us had anything to do with?' said he. 'It must be that we are cousins. Where do you live?'

"Seek-Seek explained that he didn't live anywhere in particular but was trying to find his place in the Great World. He told how he had tried to live like the other Squirrels and failed. 'I know! I know all about it,' interrupted Mr. Chipmunk. 'I've been all through it. The place for us is on the ground or at least close to it. Come see how I live.'

"So Seek-Seek went with Mr. Chipmunk and saw how he lived among the rocks and stones. For a time he tried living there too, but he didn't like the rocks and stones much better than he did the trees. Besides, all the neighbors were forever mistaking him for Mr. Chipmunk because they looked so much alike, and he didn't like this. One day he wandered out on the Green Meadows. It was very lovely out there among the grasses and flowers. He wandered farther and farther, and the farther he

wandered the better he liked it. By and by he came to the home of Yap-Yap the Prairie Dog, who is one of the Marmot family, as you know.

"'A home like that would suit me,' thought Grandfather Seek-Seek wistfully, as he journeyed on. 'I wonder if I could dig one. I believe I'll try.'

"So when he found a place to suit him he began to dig. There were no stones to hurt his feet and dull his nails, and he actually enjoyed digging. So he dug and dug until he had a wonderful underground home. All about were plenty of seeds and tender grasses to eat, and he was happy. He had found his place in the Great World. Then one day along came Old Mother Nature. 'Hello, Mr. Chipmunk,' she exclaimed, as she caught sight of his striped coat, 'what are you doing way out here?'

"Then she discovered her mistake. 'Dear me,' said she, 'this will never do at all. If I can't tell my own children apart, how can I expect others to? Your coat is altogether too much like that of Mr. Chipmunk. I must change it. I certainly must change it.'

"She leaned over and lightly tapped Seek-Seek right down the length of the broadest brown stripe of his coat. Wherever her finger touched a little spot of yellow was left. Then she did the same thing to each of the other brown stripes. When she had finished Grandfather Seek-Seek had a coat exactly like the one I am now wearing, and his cup of happiness was filled to the brim. From that day on he never was mistaken for Mr. Chipmunk or any one else. That's the story of my coat, and now I must get busy collecting seeds for my storehouse," concluded Seek-Seek. "Come and see me again, Peter Rabbit."

"I will," replied Peter, as he started for the dear Old Briar-patch to tell Mrs. Peter all about Seek-Seek and his pretty coat.

XIII

WHERE OLD MR. OSPREY LEARNED TO FISH

Peter Rabbit had seen a very strange thing. It was strange to Peter, anyway. It gave him something to think about, and this, I am sure you will agree, was a most excellent thing, for it kept him out of mischief for a while. He had been over to the Smiling Pool for a call on Jerry Muskrat and had just started back for the dear Old Briar-patch when he chanced to look over in the direction of the Big River. Coming straight towards him, but high in the air, was a big bird, a bird with broad wings. Peter didn't have to look twice to know that it was a member of the Hawk family. At first he thought it was Redtail. Then he caught a flash of white, and he thought it was Whitetail the Marsh Hawk, in spite of the fact that it didn't fly like him. Peter didn't stop to think of that. It was enough for him that a member of the Hawk family was headed that way, and he didn't care a twitch of his funny little tail which member it was. He felt that the stomach of one was quite as undesirable a place for Peter Rabbit as the stomach of another, and he had no intention of filling any if he could help it.

He remembered that there was an old house of Johnny Chuck's under the Big Hickory-tree on the bank of the Smiling Pool, and he wasted no time in getting there, lipperty-lipperty-lip, as fast as he could go. He would stay there until the way was clear to get home to the dear Old Briar-patch. As soon as he was safe in the old house of Johnny Chuck, he turned and poked his head out of the doorway. He wanted to see if any one would be caught. He hoped not, but if any one was caught, he wanted to see. You know Peter never misses anything if he can help it. On came Mr. Hawk, and when he was right over the Smiling Pool, he turned and made a short circle high in the air. Then Peter saw that he had a white waist-coat and was a stranger.

"I wonder who he is?" thought Peter, staring very hard. "He's bigger than either Redtail or Whitetail. I hope he isn't going to make his home here, because we have trouble enough as it is."

Suddenly Mr. Hawk paused high up in the air, then closed his wings and shot straight down like an arrow. Plunge! Peter couldn't believe his own eyes. Mr. Hawk actually had disappeared in the Smiling Pool! A second later there was a great splashing, and out of the water rose Mr. Hawk, flapping his great wings heavily, scattering spray in all directions. Up, up he went, and then Peter saw that in his great claws was a fish. Peter watched him fly away with the fish, and when he felt that it was quite safe to do so, he came out. Over on the end of an old log among the bulrushes sat Jerry Muskrat just where Peter had left him. It was very plain that Jerry hadn't been the least bit frightened by Mr. Hawk. Peter couldn't understand it. His eyes fairly popped out of his head with excitement and curiosity.

"Who was that?" he asked eagerly.

"That? Why, that was Plunger the Osprey, though some people call him Fish Hawk," replied Jerry. "I thought everybody knew him. Why did you run away, Peter? He wouldn't hurt you."

"Huh! I wouldn't trust *any* Hawk!" snapped Peter.

"Which goes to show how little you know!" retorted Jerry Muskrat. "Plunger never bothers anybody but the fish, but he surely is a terror to them. Old Mother Nature knew what she was doing when she made fishermen out of that family, didn't she?"

"She certainly did, though I've never heard how she came to do it. How did it happen, Jerry?" Peter was doing some fishing himself. He was fishing for a story.

Jerry Muskrat grinned. “Think you'll sleep any better if I tell you?" he inquired.

Peter grinned back and nodded. So Jerry Muskrat told him this story:

"Way back in the days when the world was young, and the great-great-ever-so-great-grandfathers of all the little people of the Green Meadows and the Green Forest of today were being started out in life by Old Mother Nature, they had everything to learn. The Great World was a new place, and they were new in it. No one knew exactly his place or what was expected of him, and Old Mother Nature was too busy to be bothered with questions. She expected each one to work out for himself a way in which to make himself useful, or at least to take care of himself, without bothering her. If he couldn't do that, she didn't want him around at all, and the sooner some thing happened to him the better. So the Great World began to be peopled with birds and animals.

"It didn't take them long to learn that it wouldn't be possible for all to live if they all ate the same kind of food. So some learned to eat one thing and some another, and all went happily until there came a time when all food was scarce, and more stomachs were empty than full. You've heard about that hard time and sad time?"

Peter nodded, and Jerry took a drink of water and then went on with his tale.

"Of course, that was really a very dreadful time, for it was then that the strong began to hunt the weak, and fear was born into the world. And yet I guess it wasn't wholly bad. Nothing is, so far as I can find out. Anyway, because of that hard time, everybody became a little smarter than before. You know an empty stomach sharpens wit, and fear puts a fine edge on it. Now Mr. Osprey, who was one of the biggest of the cousins of old King Eagle, couldn't get over a feeling of meanness whenever he hunted those smaller than himself. One day he caught little Mr. Sparrow when little Mr. Sparrow was so busy that he forgot to watch out.

"'I'm powerful sorry, Mr. Sparrow,' apologized Mr. Osprey, 'but there's an emptiness just about your size in my stomach, and it won't give me any

peace of mind until it's filled. I hate to make a neighbor uncomfortable, and I'll be just as quick and accommodating about this little matter as I can. If you'll just shut your eyes, you won't see anything unpleasant, and I won't be a minute in getting that peace of mind I've been without so long. I just must have it, or I wouldn't bother you at all. I hope you won't hold it against me, Mr. Sparrow.'

"Mr. Osprey was so nice and polite about it that little Mr. Sparrow perked up a little and started his wits working. He tried to be just as nice and polite as Mr. Osprey. 'I know just how you feel, Mr. Osprey,' said he, in a trembling voice, 'and during these hard times I've had that same ailment of the mind because of lonesomeness of the stomach, which is troubling you. So long as that emptiness is filled, I don't suppose it matters to you if I shouldn't happen to fill it.'

"'Not at all,' replied Mr. Osprey.

"'Mr. Osprey,' said little Mr. Sparrow very earnestly, 'if I were in your place, I never would go hungry. No, Sir, I never would go hungry. And I certainly never, never would trouble any of my neighbors who wear feathers. I certainly would feel most happy if Old Mother Nature had given me what she has given you. Indeed I would.'

"Mr. Osprey looked down at little Mr. Sparrow and blinked at him in a puzzled way. 'What has Old Mother Nature given me that you would be happy to have?' he asked.

"'Fishhooks!' replied little Mr. Sparrow, pointing to Mr. Osprey's great claws, 'the finest fishhooks in the world. You don't hear Billy Mink or Little Joe Otter or Mr. Heron complaining about hard times. Why? Because they don't know what hard times are. There are plenty of fish to be caught, and when they are hungry they go fishing. Fish are very filling and satisfying, I've heard say. When I flew across the Smiling Pool a little while ago, I saw a fat fish taking a sun-bath right close to the

top of the water. Seemed like he was just waiting for some one with hooks to come along and snatch him right out of the water.'

"'Where'd you say that fish was?' asked Mr. Osprey.

"'If you'll let me go, I'll show you,' replied little Mr. Sparrow.

"So Mr. Osprey let little Mr. Sparrow go, but he followed him right close. Mr. Sparrow led the way straight to the Smiling Pool. Sure enough, there was the big fish taking a sun-bath. Mr. Osprey hardly wet his feet putting those big hooks into that fish. He flew away with it, and presently he was rid of that emptiness in his stomach and had back his peace of mind. After that, whenever he was hungry, he went fishing instead of hunting the birds and the animals. By practice he learned how to use those big fishhooks of his and became one of the smartest of all fishermen. He and little Mr. Sparrow became great friends, in fact, such friends that when Mr. Osprey built a great nest, little Mr. Sparrow built his right in the side of it, and there he was perfectly safe from others who might be hunting him. And it's been just that way ever since. If you wore scales instead of fur, and lived in the water instead of on the land, Peter Rabbit, you would have reason to fear Plunger the Osprey, but as it is, you are safer when he is about than when he isn't. There comes old Redtail the Hawk. You'd better get out of sight, Peter."

Peter did.

XIV

WHERE OLD MR. BOB-CAT LEFT HIS HONOR

Of all those who are forever trying to catch Peter Rabbit, he fears none more than Yowler the Bob-cat. And from that fear has grown hate. You will find it true all through life that hate often springs from great fear. Peter isn't much given to hate, but he does hate Yowler the Bob-cat. It is partly because of his fear of Yowler, but it is still more because he feels that Yowler is not fair in his hunting. He has no honor. There are many others whom Peter fears,—Reddy Fox, Old Man Coyote, Hooty the Owl,—and with very good reason. But Peter considers that these hunt him fairly. He knows when and where to be on the watch for them.

But with Yowler it is altogether different. Yowler hides beside one of Peter's favorite little paths, and there he waits patiently for unsuspecting Peter to come along. He waits and watches much as Black Pussy, who is a cousin of Yowler, waits and watches at a mousehole. Peter feels that it doesn't give him a chance, and everybody is entitled to at least a chance to live.

"I hate him! hate him! hate him!" exclaimed Peter fiercely, as he crawled under the very middle of a great pile of brush after the narrowest of narrow escapes. He had been hopping along one of his favorite little paths without a thought of danger. Presently he came to a little branch path. There he hesitated. He had intended to keep on along the main path, but suddenly he had a feeling that it would be better to take the branch path. He knew no reason why he shouldn't keep on as he had planned. It was just a feeling that it would be better to take the other path, a feeling without any real reason. So he hesitated and finally turned down the little branch path. As he did so he caught a glimpse of a brown form moving stealthily from behind a log farther up the main little path. It was moving swiftly in the direction of the little branch path. That

glimpse was enough for Peter. That stealthy form could be but one person—Yowler the Bob-cat. He turned and darted back the way he had come and then off to one side to the great pile of brush under which he had crawled.

"Who is it you hate?" asked a voice.

For just a second Peter was startled, then he recognized the voice of Mrs. Grouse, one of his very best friends. "Yowler the Bob-cat," said he as fiercely as before.

"I don't love him myself," replied Mrs. Grouse. "I suspected that he was somewhere about, and that is why I am here. Did you see him?"

"Yes," said Peter, "I saw him. He was hiding beside my favorite little path, and it is a wonder I didn't hop straight into his jaws. That fellow doesn't hunt fairly. He doesn't give us a chance. He hasn't any honor."

"Honor!" exclaimed Mrs. Grouse. "Honor! Of course he hasn't any honor. There hasn't been any honor in Yowler's family since old Mr.Bob-cat, the first of all the Bob-cats, left his honor in Turkey Wood, way back in the days when the world was young, and failed to get it again. Honor! Of course Yowler hasn't any. What could you expect?"

At once Peter was all ears. "I've never heard about that," said he. "Tell me about it, Mrs. Grouse. We've got to stay right where we are for a long time to make sure that Yowler has given us up and gone away, so you will have plenty of time to tell me the story. Where was Turkey Wood, and how did old Mr. Bob-cat happen to leave his honor there?"

"He didn't happen to; he did it deliberately," replied Mrs. Grouse. "You see, it was like this: In the beginning of things, when Old Mother Nature made the first little people and the first big people of the Green Forest and the Green Meadows, she was too busy to watch over them all the time, so for a while she put them on their honor not to harm one another

or interfere with one another in any way, for she wanted them to live in peace and happiness and raise families to people the Great World.

"Now it chanced that Mr. and Mrs. Gobbler, the first of the Turkey family, chose a certain little grove of trees in which to make their home, and it became known as Turkey Wood. There, in course of time, Mrs. Turkey made her nest on the ground, well hidden among some bushes, and in it laid twelve big eggs. It was the day on which she laid the twelfth big egg that old Mr. Bob-cat, who, of course, wasn't old then, took it into his head to prowl about in Turkey Wood. Already Mr. Bob-cat had begun to form a sneaky habit of stealth. He was very fond of watching his neighbors to find out what they were about, and it was this fondness of minding the business of other people instead of his own that was making him sneaky and stealthy, for of course he didn't want any one to know what he was doing.

"It happened that as he stole into Turkey Wood, Mrs. Gobbler left her nest to get a bite to eat. Mr. Bob-cat saw her, but she didn't see him. He crouched flat until she was out of sight.

"'She seemed mighty careful about how she slipped out of those bushes,' thought Mr. Bob-cat. 'She acted as if she didn't want to be seen. I wonder why. I wonder if she has a secret hidden in those bushes. I suppose the way to find out is to look.'

"First making sure that no one saw him, Mr. Bob-cat crept in his sneaky way into the bushes, and it didn't take him long to find that nest with the twelve big eggs. He didn't know what they were, for they were the first eggs he had ever seen. He stared at them and wondered if they were good to eat. He glanced this way and that way to be sure that no one was watching him.

"'Don't touch them,' warned something inside of him. 'These belong to Mrs. Gobbler, and Old Mother Nature has put you on your honor not to interfere with others or their affairs.'

"'It won't do any harm just to touch them and see what they are like,' said another little tempting voice inside of him.

"'Remember your honor,' warned the first little voice.

"'Bother my honor! I'm not going to do any harm,' muttered Mr. Bob-cat, and picked up one of the eggs in his mouth. He tried it with his teeth to see if it was hard, and of course he put his teeth right through the shell. He started to put it back in a hurry, but just then he noticed a good taste in his mouth. The inside of that egg was good to eat, very good indeed!

"'One won't be missed,' thought Mr. Bob-cat, and then, fearing that Mrs. Gobbler would return, he bounded away, taking the egg with him.

"When Mrs. Gobbler returned, she did miss that egg. She looked all about for it, but there was nothing to show what had become of it. With a troubled mind she began to sit on her eggs. She was so worried that she didn't leave them until she simply *had* to get something to eat.

"Meanwhile Mr. Bob-cat had eaten that egg, and it had tasted so good that he could think of nothing but how he could get another. So at the first opportunity he sneaked back to Turkey Wood, and without making a sound crept in among the bushes until he could see Mrs. Gobbler sitting on her eggs. There he lay and watched and watched until Mrs. Gobbler left to get something to eat. No sooner was she out of sight than Mr. Bob-cat stole to the nest.

"'Remember your honor,' warned the little voice inside.

"'Bother honor. I'd rather have an egg,' muttered Mr. Bob-cat, and pulled one out of the nest. He bit a hole in one end and sucked out the contents. It was so good he took another. This led to a third, and finally Mr. Bob-cat had sucked every one of those eggs. Then silently he sneaked away —away from Turkey Wood to a distant part of the Green Forest. Behind him in Turkey Wood he left a nest full of empty shells and his honor.

"'Nobody knows who did it, and nobody ever will find out,' thought Mr. Bob-cat, but all the time he knew that he had left his honor behind, and this made him more sneaky than ever. He never would meet any one face to face. You know that is something that one who has lost his honor never can do. It wasn't long before all his neighbors knew that he was without honor, and so would have nothing to do with him. They shunned him. He grew to be more and more of a sneak. And all the time he believed that no one knew what he had done or where he had left his honor.

"But Old Mother Nature knew. Of course Mrs. Gobbler told her what had happened to her eggs. Old Mother Nature told her to make a new nest and hide it more carefully than before, which Mrs. Gobbler did and hatched out ten fine young Gobblers. Meanwhile Old Mother Nature went about her business, but all the time she was watching to see who would fail to look her straight in the face. The first time she met Mr. Bob-cat he tried to slip past unseen. When Old Mother Nature stepped in front of him, he couldn't look her in the face, try as he would.

"'Ah-ha!' said she. 'You are the one who left his honor in Turkey Wood. From this time forth you shall be an outcast, friendless and alone, hated by every one.'

"And so it was, and has been ever since. And so it is with Yowler today. You said truly, Peter, that he hasn't any honor. Isn't it dreadful?"

And Peter agreed that it is.

XV

WHERE DIPPY THE LOON GOT THE NAME OF BEING CRAZY

As you all know, Peter Rabbit is out and about at a time when most folks are snugly tucked in bed. The fact is, Peter is very fond of roaming around at night. He says he feels safer then in spite of the fact that some of his smartest enemies are also out and about, among them Hooty the Owl and Reddy Fox and Old Man Coyote. The two latter also hunt by day when the fancy takes them or they have been so unsuccessful at night that their stomachs won't give them any peace, and Peter is sure that though they can see very well at night, they can see still better in the light of day. Anyway, that is one of the reasons he gives for his own liking for roaming after jolly, round, red Mr. Sun has gone to bed behind the Purple Hills.

Now it happened one moonlight night that Peter had ventured way over almost to the Big River. He had heard Hooty the Owl's fierce hunting call far off in the Green Forest. He had heard Reddy Fox barking up in the Old Pasture. So Peter felt quite safe. He felt so safe that he had almost forgotten that there could be such a thing as fear. And then, from the direction of the Big River, there came such a sound as Peter never had heard before. It was a sound that made his heart seem to quite stop beating for an instant. It was a sound that sent cold chills racing and chasing all over him. It was a sound that made him wish with all his might that he was that instant right in the heart of the dear Old Briar-patch instead of way over there near the bank of the Big River.

He didn't waste much time getting back to the dear Old Briar-patch, once he was sure his heart hadn't really stopped beating. The way he went across the Green Meadows, lipperty-lipperty-lip, lipperty-lipperty-lip, was positive proof that in spite of his fright his heart was quite all right. He didn't run a little way, stop, run a little farther and stop again, as is his

usual way. He kept lipperty-lipperty-lipping without a single stop until he reached the edge of the dear Old Briar-patch and once more felt really safe. Two or three times he had felt that he must stop to get his breath, but each time that sound, that dreadful sound, had seemed to be following right at his heels, and he had suddenly discovered that he didn't need to stop after all.

But having reached the dear Old Briar-patch Peter stopped and panted for breath while he anxiously watched for the appearance of some unknown enemy following him. It was then that he realized that that sound came from the Big River, and that whoever made it had not left the Big River at all. It made Peter feel a wee bit foolish as he thought how he had been sure that there was danger right at his very heels all the way home, when all the time there hadn't been any danger at all.

Peter sat there and listened, and despite the fact that he now felt absolutely safe, the cold chills ran over him every time he heard it. It was a voice; Peter was sure of that. It was a voice, but such a voice as Peter never in his life had heard before. It was quite as bad if not worse than the voice of Old Man Coyote. In a way it reminded him of Old Man Coyote's voice, but while Old Man Coyote's voice sounded like many voices in one, it was not so fearsome as this voice, for this voice sounded like a human voice, yet wasn't. Something inside Peter told him that it wasn't a human voice, in spite of its sounding so.

The next morning Peter ran over to the Smiling Pool to ask Grandfather Frog if he had any idea who could have such a voice as that. When he tried to tell Grandfather Frog what that voice was like, he couldn't. He just couldn't describe it.

"It was the lonesomest and craziest sound I've ever heard," declared Peter, "and that is all I can tell you. It was crazier than the voice of Old Man Coyote."

"That is all you need tell me," chuckled Grandfather Frog. "That was the voice of Dippy the Loon. And let me tell you something, Peter: you are not the first one to think his voice has a crazy sound. Oh, my, no! No, indeed! Why, a lot of people think Dippy *is* crazy, and when any one does queer things they say of him that he is 'crazy as a Loon.'

"But is he crazy?" asked Peter.

"Chug-a-rum!" exclaimed Grandfather Frog. "Chug-a-rum! Not half so crazy as you are, Peter, coming over here to the Smiling Pool in broad daylight. He likes to be thought crazy, just as his great-great-ever-so-great-grandfather did before him, that's all.

Everybody thought his great-great-ever-so-great-grandfather was crazy, and it paid Mr. Loon to have them think so. So he did his best to make them keep thinking so."

"Tell me about it. Do please tell me about it, Grandfather Frog," begged Peter. "Please, please, please."

Now how could Grandfather Frog resist that? He couldn't. He didn't even try to. He just cleared his throat once or twice and began.

"Once on a time, long, long ago, lived the very first of all the Loons, the ever-and-ever-and-ever-so-great-grandfather of Dippy, whose voice frightened you so last night."

"How did you know it frightened me?" exclaimed Peter, for he had taken care not to tell Grandfather Frog anything about that.

Grandfather Frog chuckled and went right on with his story. "Right from the beginning Mr. Loon was a mighty independent fellow. It didn't take him long to find out that Old Mother Nature had too much to do to waste any time on those who didn't try to take care of themselves, and that those would live longest who were smartest and most independent. He had sharp eyes, had old Mr. Loon, just as Dippy has today, and he used them to good account. He saw at once that with so many birds and

animals living on the land it was likely to get crowded after a while, and that when such became the case, it was going to be mighty hard work for some to get a living. So Mr. Loon went to Mother Nature and told her that if she had no objections he would like a pair of swimming feet and would live on the water.

"Now Old Mother Nature had just fitted out Mr. Duck with a pair of webbed feet that he might swim, so she was quite prepared to fit Mr. Loon out in like manner.

"'I suppose,' said she, 'that you want a bill like Mr. Duck's.'

"Mr. Loon shook his head. 'Thank you,' said he, 'but I would prefer a sharp bill to a broad one.'

"'How is that?' exclaimed Mother Nature. 'Mr. Duck has been delighted with his bill ever since I gave it to him.'

"'And with good reason,' replied Mr. Loon. 'Did I propose to live as Mr. Duck lives, I should want a bill just like his, but I find that fish are more to my liking. Also I have noticed that there are fewer who eat fish.'

"So Mother Nature gave him the kind of bill he wanted, and Mr. Loon went about his business. He managed to get fish enough to keep from going hungry, but he found that the only way he could do it was to sit perfectly still until a fish swam within reach and then strike swiftly. In fact, his fishing was much like that of Mr. Heron, save that the latter stood instead of sitting. Success was chiefly the result of luck and patience.

"Now this sort of thing was not at all to the liking of Mr. Loon. He gloried in his strength and he wanted to hunt for his fish and catch them in fair chase instead of waiting for them to unsuspectingly swim within reach. He practised and practised swimming and diving, but he soon made up his mind that he never would be able to move through the water fast enough to catch a fish unless there was some change. He watched

the fish swim, and he saw that the power which drove them through the water came from their tails. Mr. Loon grew very thoughtful.

"The next time Mother Nature came around to see how everybody was getting on, to hear complaints, and to grant such requests as seemed wise, Mr. Loon was on hand. 'If you please,' said he when his turn came, 'I would like my legs moved back to the lower end of my body.'

"Mother Nature was surprised. She looked it. 'But you'll hardly be able to walk at all with your legs there!' she exclaimed.

"Mr. Loon said that he knew that, and that he didn't want to walk. He would far rather spend all his time on the water. So Mother Nature granted his request. Mr. Loon thanked her and started for the water.

He couldn't keep his balance. He simply flopped along, while all his neighbors, who had heard his queer request, jeered at him and called him crazy. He just didn't pay any attention, but flopped along until he reached the water. Then he swam away swiftly. When he was quite by himself with none to see, he dived, and as he had hoped, he found that he could drive himself through the water at great speed. He practised a while and then he went fishing. When he caught his first fish in a fair chase, he was so delighted that he shrieked and shouted and laughed in the wildest fashion far into the night. And those who had heard his strange request and thought him crazy were sure of it, as they listened to his wild laughter.

"So little by little it was spread about among all the other people that

Mr. Loon was crazy, and he was left much to himself, which was just what he desired. He was quick to note that the sound of his voice sent shivers over some of his neighbors, and so he would shriek and laugh just to drive them away. It pleased him to have them think him crazy, and he kept it up.

"So it is with Dippy today, and last night you ran from the voice of a crazy Loon who isn't crazy at all, but likes to make people think he is," concluded Grandfather Frog.

XVI

WHERE BIG-HORN GOT HIS CURVED HORNS

It was Digger the Badger who told Peter Rabbit the story of the great Ram who was the first of all the wild Sheep who live on the tops of the mountains bounding the great plains of the Far West on which Digger was born. It happened that Farmer Brown's flock of Sheep were grazing in the Old Pasture in plain sight of Digger as he sat on his doorstep watching his shadow grow longer. At the head of the flock was a Ram whose horns curved around in almost a circle, and whom Peter Rabbit often had admired.

Peter happened along as Digger sat there on his doorstep watching his shadow grow longer, so he sat down at a safe and respectful distance and helped Digger watch his shadow grow longer. Peter delights in doing things like this, because it isn't hard work at all. It is only when there is real work concerned that Peter loses interest. A lot of people are just like Peter in this respect.

Peter gazed over at the Old Pasture and he, too, saw Farmer Brown's Sheep and the big Ram with the curving horns at his head. For a long time Peter had greatly admired those horns, though he never had told any one so. He had admired those horns because they were different from any other horns Peter ever had seen. They looked perfectly useless for fighting because they curved so that the points never could be made to hurt any one, but just the same Peter admired them. Now as he watched he spoke aloud, without thinking what he was doing.

"I wish I had a pair of horns like those," said he wistfully.

Digger the Badger stopped watching his shadow, and turned to stare at Peter. Then he laughed until finally he choked. Peter looked at him in surprise.

"What's the matter with you, Mr. Badger?" asked he. "What is there to laugh at?"

"Only you, Peter. Only you," replied Digger faintly, for he had laughed so hard that he had almost lost his voice. "I am afraid you would find a pair of horns like those rather heavy, Peter, rather heavy."

Peter grinned. "Of course I didn't really mean that," said he. “Of course not. I was just thinking how nice it would be to have such fine horns, if one were big enough to have horns. I don't believe there are any other such horns in all the Great World."

"And that shows how little you know about the Great World, Peter," retorted Digger the Badger.

"Did you ever see such horns before?" demanded Peter.

"No, I never did," confessed Digger, "but I've heard my grandfather tell of Sheep that live on the tops of the great mountains as free as Light-foot the Deer or any other of the Green Forest people, and with horns so large that they, the Sheep, are called Big-Horns. From what I have heard my grandfather say, those horns over there of Mr. Ram's are nothing to brag about. No, Sir, they are nothing to brag about. One of those wild, free cousins of Mr. Ram over there would laugh at those horns. But they are funny horns, and they've been like that always since the days of the first great Ram, the great-great-ever-so-great-grandfather of all the Sheep, so my grandfather told me. It was way back in those long-ago days that they became curved and quite useless for fighting, and all because of old Big-Horn going about with a chip on his shoulder."

Peter pricked up his ears. "That was a funny thing for Big-Horn to be doing," said he. "What under the sun did he have a chip on his shoulder for? And what harm was there in that, even if he did?"

Once more Digger began to laugh. "Peter," said he, "you certainly are the funniest fellow I know. Of course old Big-Horn didn't really have a

chip on his shoulder. That is just a saying, Peter, just a saying. When any one goes about looking for trouble and ready to quarrel at the least pretext, he is said to be carrying a chip on his shoulder and daring anybody to knock it off."

"Oh!" said Peter.

"And so," continued Digger, "Big-Horn didn't have anything to do with a really, truly chip, but just went about always trying to get somebody to fight with him. It wasn't that Big-Horn was ugly. He wasn't. You see Old Mother Nature had given him great strength. Yes, Sir, for his size Big-Horn was very strong, and in that strength be took great pride. And Mother Nature had given him a pair of very large and strong horns with which to defend himself if there should be need. Those horns were almost straight, and with Big-Horn's great strength behind them, they were truly dangerous weapons. He didn't think of that. No, Sir, he didn't think of that. He was just brimming full of life, and he dearly loved to try his strength against the strength of others. It got so that the instant he saw anybody, down would go his head and at them he would go full tilt.

"It was great fun—for him. Sometimes he got the worst of it, as when Old King Bear stepped aside at the very last instant and hit him such a clip with his great paw that Big-Horn was sent rolling over and over and lost his breath for a few minutes. But usually it was the other who got the worst of it, for those great, sharp-pointed horns of Big-Horn's tore and hurt. Indeed, even when he tried to be gentle with those smaller than him self he was forever hurting some one.

"Finally some of his neighbors wished to go to Old Mother Nature and complain about Big-Horn, but others were against this plan because they knew that Old Mother Nature was quite loaded down with cares and worries as it was. So instead they called a meeting to which everybody except Big-Horn was invited. If Big-Horn could have heard all that was said about him, his ears surely would have burned. Every one was of the opinion that something must be done, but just what no one could

suggest. At last, just when it seemed that the meeting would break up without anything being done, Old Man Coyote stepped forward. Now Old Man Coyote already was known as a very clever fellow, more clever even than Mr. Fox, though it would never have done to say so where it would get back to the ears of Mr. Fox.

"'Friends and neighbors,' said Old Man Coyote, 'it seems to me a very simple matter to teach Neighbor Big-Horn a lesson that he will not soon forget. Being rather bashful, I haven't liked to suggest it before, because I thought surely some one else would do it. I suggest that some one be selected to fight Big-Horn, and when that one can fight no longer, some one else be selected to fight him, and so on until he gets tired, and some one can whip him. Then I think he will have had enough of fighting.'

"Up spoke Mr. Fox and he winked at his neighbor on the right and he winked at his neighbor on the left. 'That is a very good idea of Neighbor Coyote's,' said he, 'a very good idea indeed, and I suggest that Mr. Coyote be selected for the honor of being the first one to fight Big-Horn.' Mr. Fox grinned in a sly way, and everybody else grinned, for everybody knew that Old Man Coyote never was known to fight when there was a chance to run away. So with one accord everybody agreed with Mr. Fox, and Old Man Coyote was selected as the first one to face Big-Horn. To everybody's surprise, Old Man Coyote made no objections. Instead he expressed himself as highly honored, and said that he hoped to do so well that there would be no need for others to fight Big-Horn. So it was arranged that Big-Horn should be invited to fight Old Man Coyote the very next day.

"You may be sure that everybody was on hand the next day to see that fight. No one expected Old Man Coyote to appear. But he did. Yes, Sir, he did. He was right on hand at the appointed time. Big-Horn hadn't been told whom he was to fight, and when he found that it was Old Man Coyote, he was disappointed. You see, there was no anger in Big-Horn's fighting; he fought just for the love of using his great strength and big horns. Fighting was fun to him, and he wanted some one who would

stand up to him. As soon as it was explained to him that when he had disposed of Old Man Coyote there would be some one else for him to fight (Mr. Deer had offered to be the next), he felt better. Mr. Deer had horns and was somewhere near his size.

"Old Man Coyote slipped around until he had his back to a great rock. 'I'm ready any time,' said he.

"Big-Horn, who had been stamping with impatience, lowered his head so that his horns pointed straight at Old Man Coyote. He grinned as he did it, for he saw that with that great rock behind him, Old Man Coyote would have no chance to run away as he always had done in the past. Everybody else saw the same thing, and wondered what could have happened to make Old Man Coyote so stupid as to do such a thing as that, he who always had been accounted so clever. But they had hardly time to think of this, for with a snort Big-Horn bounded forward. All the others held their breath as they saw those great horns driving straight at Old Man Coyote, who was crouched with his back to the great rock. Then everybody closed their eyes for a second, for nobody wanted to see Old Man Coyote killed, and everybody *knew* that that was what was going to happen.

"Then there was a crash, and everybody's eyes flew open. There lay Big-Horn on the ground, looking mighty puzzled, as if he wasn't quite sure what had happened. And there sat Old Man Coyote, grinning at him! They were still staring at Old Man Coyote as if they couldn't believe their own eyes when some one cried, 'Look at the horns of Big-Horn!'

"Instead of being long and straight, those great horns were curved over and round into almost a circle, and there was no longer danger from their sharp points. What had happened? Why, at just the right instant Old Man Coyote had leaped over Big-Horn, and Big-Horn had butted into that great rock with all his might. He had hit so hard, biff! bang! that he had bent his horns, just as crafty, clever Old Man Coyote had hoped he would.

"When Old Mother Nature heard of the affair and saw those bent horns, she chuckled at the cleverness of Old Man Coyote and decided to leave those horns just as they were for the safety of Big-Horn's neighbors. And so they remained as long as Big-Horn lived, and just so have been the horns in his family from that day to this," concluded Digger, and once more began to watch his shadow grow longer.

THE END

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Bobby Coon't Mistake
Grandfather Frog Stays in the Smiling Pool
Happy Jack

Mrs. Peter Rabbit
Old Granny Fox
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The Adventures of Bowser the Hound
The Adventures of Bobby Coon
The Adventures of Grandfather Frog
The Adventures of Jimmy Skunk
The Adventures of Jerry Muskrat
The Adventures of Johnny Chuck
The Adventures of Old Man Coyote
The Adventures of Old Mister Buzzard
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The Adventures of Mr. Mocker
Reddy Fox Disobeys